

Knowers and Enquirers

A collaborative enquiry into
dialogic reflection in the
occupational therapy curriculum

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2018

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Healthcare Sciences

Cardiff University

Declaration and Statements

Declaration

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

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Acknowledgements

This PhD would not have been possible without the support from those around me. First and foremost, I must give my special thanks to my family members, Wong Chong Gian, Soon Siew Lay and Wong Ken Loong, who had to sit through hours on Skype where I talked endlessly about my latest research progress. They have supported me unconditionally over the years and for that I will always be grateful.

Secondly, I must thank my supervisors for the many intellectually stimulating conversations that we have had. I am deeply appreciative of Dr. Gail Boniface and Dr. Steve Whitcombe for their constant encouragement, for believing in my abilities and for enduring my philosophical ramblings. I would like thank Professor Ben Hannigan as well for taking me on as a student and for seeing me through the final leg of the PhD.

Thirdly, I have to express my gratitude to my colleagues Dalal Alothman and Kate Jones. They had made this journey less isolating by riding the highs and lows along with me. Our brunch and tea sessions have provided me with much needed space for reflection on the tribulations and successes.

Fourthly, I am grateful for my friends from home, particularly Teo Yi Ning, for taking my mind off work with Friday games night. Despite being eleven thousand kilometres apart, we still managed to save the world many times over from the onslaught of zombies, orcs and bullymonges.

Lastly, I am greatly indebted to the occupational therapy students who embarked on this research with me. This thesis is only possible because of their contribution and in writing it, I hope I have done justice to our collaboration.

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Abstract

Reflective practice is the central tenet of occupational therapy professional practice. As a result, reflection is something that occupational therapy students are taught and assessed on before they qualify as practitioners. However, research shows that there are some issues relating to how reflection is being taught, assessed, and learned in institutions. Dialogic reflection, a process where students engage in reflective conversations with their peers about their experience, was suggested as a possible alternative, albeit the theories about it are rather scarce.

This research explored the suitability of dialogic reflection in promoting professional development in the occupational therapy curriculum. Fourteen post-graduate diploma occupational therapy students and I formed two action research groups for this enquiry. We developed our understanding of dialogic reflection through iterative cycles of participating in dialogic reflections and reflecting on our experiences of them. Reflection and thematic analysis were used to make sense of the data we generated.

In this thesis, I argued that issues relating to reflection and dialogic reflection stem from fundamental differences in the many perspectives of reflection. Therefore, dialogic reflection should be conceptualised as something beyond a skill for practice, a tool for learning or a method of demonstrating professional development. In our theory of dialogic reflection, we argued that it is a co-operative way of understanding ourselves through an emotionally charged and morally driven exploration of our interactions with the world. My original contribution is this perspective of dialogic reflection as an epistemology, and I assert that it should be treated as so in education and professional practice. Hence, I maintain that it is something that can be taught but cannot be assessed. Dialogic reflection can promote professional development and it is important in occupational therapy practice as it encourages the practitioner to explore himself or herself as a practitioner and a person.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Occupational therapy is a caring profession (Devereaux 1984) that aims to get its service users back to participating in activities that they value after a period of interruption such as an ailment or injury, change in physical or mental condition or change in their social circumstances (Duncan 2011). Occupational therapists see their service users as unique individuals and occupational therapy practice thus needs to be client-centred. Being in a profession of this nature, occupational therapists are encouraged to look back on their practice and develop from their own past experiences (COT 2014). This process is referred to as reflective practice.

My interest in reflective practice began when I was a BSc Occupational Therapy student. I was perplexed by the fact that reflective practice was considered by the occupational therapy profession as of great importance however I personally found reflective practice, as I had understood it then, rather contrived and meaningless. Thus, as part of my degree course, I conducted a research study to understand how other occupational therapy students from my cohort experienced reflective practice. That study concluded that some students understood reflective practice as a problem-solving method. In addition, they experienced reticence when reflecting with their educators and when writing reflective assignments. However, they also noted that reflection, when conducted with their peers, was effective for triggering professional development. I saw reflection on one's own and reflection with someone else as different processes. I call the latter dialogic reflection.

These findings were significant because they suggested that there are some issues with teaching and learning about reflective practice in the curriculum. I realised reflective practice was not meaningless like I had initially thought, rather it was how reflective practice was taught and encouraged in the profession that made it appear so.

While dialogic reflection was suggested as a better alternative in that study, there was a remarkable lack in the literature about the topic. There was an afternoon at the university where we were grouped according to our placement settings and allowed an hour to share our experiences. It was at that session when I felt that I had learnt more about my placement setting than I had when I wrote my reflective pieces. I thought: why do we not do more of this form of reflection on the course? That was when I started becoming interested in the reflective process as a collaborative and dialogic venture rather than a monologic process that one undergoes on one's own.

Having just graduated from my degree in occupational therapy, I conducted this PhD study to understand the suitability of dialogic reflection in the occupational therapy curriculum. To this end, I sought to better understand dialogic reflection, its value for occupational therapy students and how it can be integrated into the curriculum. I recruited fourteen Post-Graduate Diploma occupational therapy students for this action research. I was first introduced to them by the programme manager when I was observing their problem-based learning groups. I became acquainted with these students during my observation sessions and they became interested in my PhD research. Some of these students eventually joined my study as co-researchers.

However, as this research progressed, it was discovered that dialogic reflection is far more meaningful than a problem-solving method and can be more than an instrument for learning. Dialogic reflection is also more than a method of professional development or an evidence of it. This research revealed that dialogic reflection can be seen as a way of life and a way of knowing about the world. It plays an instrumental role in our understanding of the world around us through an intellectual, emotional, and morally-driven analysis and evaluation of our own experience. It is a natural and artistic way of knowing from our own experience, with others whom we choose to reflect with. Dialogic reflection can arguably be viewed as an epistemology.

1.1. Thesis layout

I present this thesis in four parts: background information about reflective practice and occupational therapy in Part One, my methodological approach to conducting this study in Part Two, my findings and discussions about dialogic reflection as an epistemology in Part Three and finally my findings and discussions about the implementation of dialogic reflection in Part Four.

The following table summarises the layout of thesis:

Layout of this thesis		Thesis Description				
		Introduction	Literature review	Methodology/ Method	Findings and Discussions	Conclusion
	1. Introduction					
Part 1	2. Occupational Therapy and the Importance of Reflective Practice					
	3. Reflection and Dialogic Reflection					
Part 2	4. Paradigm and Purpose of Enquiry					
	5. Conducting the Research					
Part 3	6. Overview of Themes and Key Principles of Dialogic Reflection					
	7. The Epistemic Clash in Reflection and Dialogic Reflection					
	8. Conducting an Enquiry Through Dialogic Reflection					
	9. A Community of Knowers and Enquirers					
	10. The Art of Knowing from Experience Through Dialogue					
Part 4	11. Dialogic Reflection as an Epistemology					
	12. Learning, Teaching, Guiding, and Assessing Dialogic Reflection					
	13. Placing Dialogic Reflection in Professional Practice					
	14. Conclusion					

Table 1. Thesis Layout

The following sections explain the contents of each part of the thesis and how they relate to each other, with reference to the above table.

1.1.1. Part One: Reflective Practice in Occupational Therapy

Beginning with a discussion about occupational therapy as a profession, I draw the links between the nature of the profession and the importance of reflection in occupational therapy practice.

The way reflection and reflective practice were being encouraged in professional practice had led to some confusion about what it means (Eraut 1994). It also bred a rather instrumental perspective of what reflection was and how it could be used (Johns 2013). This part lays the background to this study from the literature review I conducted. It describes occupational therapy and reflection and how they relate to each other. It also reports some issues in reflection (Burton 2000; Gilbert 2001; Russell 2005) and theories that describe dialogic reflection where one reflects with others (Gibbs 1988; Driscoll 1994; Boniface 2002). I further elaborate on some of these concepts in Parts Three and Four of this thesis alongside my findings to build a deeper and more coherent discussion.

1.1.2. Part Two: Developing This Study About Dialogic Reflection

I conducted this research to develop my understanding about dialogic reflection. To do so, there are some deep methodological considerations in the development of this study. This part of the thesis features the paradigmatic debate in this research and my thoughts on the purpose of enquiry in general. These considerations then guided me in my choice of methodology and method in this research. The methodology of this research was highly reflexive in the sense that it developed as the research progressed in response to how my co-researchers and I decided to direct the research to explore and develop our theory. In this thesis, I refer to my participants as my co-researchers. In appreciation of the participatory paradigm and Co-operative Inquiry, they were both the researchers and the participants of the study. Maintaining a great degree of co-operation in this research was tricky but it enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings of the research as these findings were developed, analysed, discussed jointly by my co-researchers and me.

1.1.3. Part Three: Dialogic Reflection as An Epistemology

Synthesising evidence from literature and from my research findings, I present my arguments for dialogic reflection to be considered as an epistemology about knowledge construction from experience. The four lines of argument for this are:

1. The current state of confusion and difficulties regarding the use and the expression of reflective practice and dialogic reflection appears to stem from a conflict in the fundamental perspectives of these concepts. Due to the clashes in the understanding of reflection at the epistemic level, there is a need to conceptualise dialogic reflection at this level to avoid adding to the confusion.
2. As this research was essentially a meta-dialogic reflection – a dialogic and reflective enquiry on dialogic reflection, I argue that dialogic reflection is an approach to knowing and enquiry. Dialogic reflection is about developing an understanding of oneself in natural, unfacilitated, yet highly analytical dialogue with others.
3. Dialogic reflection is about knowing from our experiences, and from others whom we choose to reflect with. Dialogic reflectors are a community of knowers and enquirers who craft an understanding of their own worlds in a social environment.
4. Experience carries an aesthetic characteristic which results in dialogic reflection being an artistic approach to knowing. Dialogic reflection is not only an intellectual analysis of our experience, it is also emotional and value-driven.

I end Part Three of the thesis by presenting a taxonomy of dialogic reflection which delineates two distinct forms of this epistemology – extrospection and introspection.

1.1.4. Part Four: Implications and Applications of Dialogic Reflection

Part Four is predominantly discussions of the significance of the findings and its impact for occupational therapy students, educators and practitioners. I draw on some of the data from this research in support of the discussions where suitable. In concluding that dialogic reflection can be perceived as a way of knowing, I present the implications in the education and the professional milieus. I also provide some recommendations for the application of dialogic reflection in these settings.

Even though Part Three and Part Four of the thesis draw on the findings of the research, I decided to start some of the chapters in these parts with some theoretical discussion about the ideas and concepts that are central to the chapters. While some of these theoretical discussions were conducted as part of the literature review, some ideas only became pertinent as the theory of dialogic reflection developed through the research. By opening and interweaving these chapters with some background theory, I hope the reader can get a better sense of the discussion as it develops and transforms in the chapters with the inclusion of the findings.

I do not claim that dialogic reflection is the only way to acquire knowledge nor that we only learn from experiencing something. Rather, my contribution to knowledge is this claim for dialogic reflection to be perceived as an epistemology. In considering it as a philosophy of knowing, there are many implications and potential applications in education and professional practice. As an epistemology, it naturally has far reaching influences in our lives and the way we understand our relationship with the world. I offer the perspective of dialogic reflection as a philosophical position which I believe should be further developed with more research.

As an occupational therapist myself, this research was an enlightening experience because it led to me to question myself as a reflective practitioner. This thesis is an expression of this journey that I undertook to arrive at this new understanding and perspective of dialogic reflection. It is only appropriate that I write about this theory of dialogic reflection in a deeply reflective manner, demonstrating the reflective exchanges I had with others in this research and with myself as this research developed.

Part One: Reflective Practice in Occupational Therapy

The two chapters in this part of the thesis establish the importance of this research and its relevance. It features discussions about occupational therapy as a reflective profession and the inherent issues of reflective practice.

Chapter Two introduces occupational therapy as a profession and its place in the health and social care system. It presents a discussion about the nature of the profession and the importance of reflective practice.

Chapter Three concerns reflection and the issues regarding its use. It also explores the implications of these issues and introduces dialogic reflection.

Chapter 2. Occupational Therapy and the Importance of Reflective Practice

Occupational therapy is a profession that uses daily activities as part of therapy to “achieve goals that are meaningful” to its service users (Duncan 2011a, p. 5). The profession believes that each person desires to participate effectively in meaningful activities for better health, well-being and life satisfaction (Dige 2009; COT 2015). Activities that are valuable and meaningful to the service user is what the profession refers to as occupation. The profession understands that the value and meaning in occupations are constructed by the service users (COT 2015), hence these occupations will differ according to individual needs, strengths, environment and circumstances (Duncan 2011a).

The knowledge base in occupational therapy is derived from a wide range of disciplines from medicine to social sciences, including ethics and art and crafts (Duncan 2011a). In addition, the profession also relies heavily on knowledge drawn from experience since every service user is a unique case with his or her unique set of needs, abilities, and circumstances. The focus on the service user’s everyday activities appears to be deceptively simple; the intricacy of occupational therapy practice lies in the understanding of the service user and the occupations, the factors and impact of the affliction or interruption of these occupations and the development and the evaluation of therapeutic interventions that help service users achieve their goals (Duncan 2011a).

2.1. Development of Occupational Therapy as a Profession

The development of the occupational therapy philosophy began during the 1700s (Occupational Therapy New Zealand 2010). The mentally unwell were put in asylums as they were thought to be a danger to society. In France in 1793, Phillipe Pinel pioneered a moral and occupational approach to the treatment of mental illnesses. This approach of treatment made use of purposeful daily activities with the belief that in getting involved in activities that one is interested in and values, one can be relieved of emotional stress (Occupational Therapy New Zealand 2010). William Tuke then furthered this moral treatment of mental illnesses in the 1800s, arguing that religion, family and occupations would promote function and mitigate symptoms of the mental conditions (Wilcock 2001).

During the First World War, there was a need to rehabilitate the injured to return to employment due to the scarcity of manpower in the workforce. This allowed the development of occupational therapy initially in the treatment of those with physical disabilities. Occupational therapy started gaining recognition in the 1900s though for economic gain via generating more productivity rather than therapeutic purposes in the United Kingdom (UK) (Duncan 2011b). Nonetheless, this led to the setting up of formal training centres in occupational therapy, with the input of theory and practice from medicine and other disciplines (Duncan 2011b). The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) was formed in 1951 as the international organisation for the promotion of occupational therapy and advancement of its education and training (WFOT 2012a). The British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT), the professional body, was formed in 1974 and subsequently set up the College of Occupational Therapists (COT) in 1978, later renamed Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) in 2017, which is responsible for the professional, educational and research business of the profession, i.e. the representation of the professional body (BAOT 1999). The profession is regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) in UK which protects the public by

ensuring that its registered occupational therapists meet their standards for training, professional skills, behaviour and health (HCPC 2016a).

Occupational therapy has seen multiple roles and identity changes in its process of professionalisation. This was largely because the profession is constantly adapting to the shifts in the needs of society. Occupational therapy finds its groundings in the meaning of activities to its service users. As social needs change, this meaning often shifts accordingly (Zemke 2004). For example, the value of being able to go to work to earn money may change according to the economic climate. The breadth of responsibilities of occupational therapy, while allowing the profession to be relevant in multiple areas and circumstances, makes the profession vulnerable to changing expectations and requirements of its service users. However, as the role of occupational therapy changes, it becomes harder for the profession to establish a stable professional identity that people can commonly identify with.

Apart from the difficulties of establishing a professional identity in the eyes of its service users, occupational therapy also faces difficulties in drawing clear professional boundaries within which it has dominance. The purview of occupational therapy is rather broad, encompassing the biological, cognitive, psychological, philosophical aspects of life. Hence there is a certain struggle for occupational therapists to find their place in the professional environment amongst other professions that have more definite expertise such as nursing, physiotherapy and dietitians (Clouston and Whitcombe 2008). The danger for occupational therapy is that it can be considered a profession that does nothing and at the same time, does everything, resulting in situations where it can be considered unimportant or useful to fill any gaps in the provision of care.

2.1.1. Technical Rationality

Part of this difficulty to establish a professional identity in occupational therapy also lies in the concepts of professionalism and the reasons that make a profession. Occupational therapy

formally received recognition as a profession in the UK through the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act (1960). However, Schön (1983) argued that Technical Rationality was a concept of professionalism that dominated during that time, while Fish and Boniface (2012) argued the occupational therapy profession was still subjected to such a view of professionalism at the point of their publication.

Schön's (1983) work on reflective practice was written in contention with the positivist interpretation of professional practice, which he referred to as Technical Rationality. Positivism here refers to the view of knowledge being only valid when supported by empirical data and research (Markie 2013).

According to the model of Technical Rationality ... professional activity consists in instrumental problem-solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique. (Schön 1983, p. 21)

Through the positivist lens, professional practice is technical and rational in the way that it solves problematic situations in practice with hard scientific theory (Schön 1983). In Schön's (1983; 1992) opinion, the reason such a view was fiercely popular at that time was because of the way professions were treated then. Professions were regarded as experts of society as they claim to possess special knowledge on crucial social issues, through education, research and practice (Hughes 1959). Society thus granted professionals special rights and privileges in exchange for solutions to the social issues present. Society then come to define professions by their expert knowledge (Schön 1983).

Under the model of Technical Rationality, Glazer (1974) divided professions into major and minor professions. Major professions refer to those grounded in large amounts of research and knowledge such as medicine and law. Minor professions such as town planning and social work are those that rely on applying the knowledge base of more established disciplines and are perceived to be superior to the professions such as political sciences and economics. Etzioni

(1969) considered them as semi-professionals. Major professions “operate in stable intuitional contexts” (Schön 1983, p. 23) and are “disciplined by an unambiguous end” (Glazer 1974, p. 363). These professions are grounded in systematic and scientific knowledge and thought to possess greater autonomy in the way they conduct their practice. Minor professions on the other hand deal with ambiguous ends and shifting contexts of practice hence are unable to ground themselves with a stable scientific knowledge base as the application of scientific research is unclear and vary with context (Schön 1983). These minor professions deal with problematic situations which are perplexing and uncertain, and it is up to the practitioner to make sense of them. Additionally, they have less autonomy over their own operations and are thought to be directed by major professions.

According to Fish and Boniface (2012), Technical Rationality is pervasive in modern day perspectives of health and social care practitioners and this is evident from the focus on “standards”, “competencies” and “quality assurance activities” (Fish 2010, p. 192). Practitioners publicly defend their profession through scientific and absolute terms such as technical expertise, evidence-based practice and education level (Fish and Boniface 2012). They fail to make explicit that they

... actually use interpretation and professional judgement (acting with discretion on the patient or client’s behalf) and thus engage in practical professional rationality. (Fish and Boniface 2012, p. 15)

Even though professionals define themselves in a technical rational way, they are in fact demonstrating more than that in their own practice (Fish and Boniface 2012).

Schön (1983), argued against Technical Rationality and the distinction between minor and major professions. Technical Rationality only thrives when the ends to be achieved by professional practice are clear and distinct. Only under these circumstances, practice situations and problems

that need solving are straightforward and so is the application of scientific theory in practice. However, this does not happen in reality (Schön 1983).

In the real-world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling and uncertain. (Schön 1983, p. 40)

Schön (1983) argued that professionals must first make sense of the problem. Problematic situations that make little sense are increasingly central to all professions. Problem setting is hence increasingly more necessary than problem-solving. Technical Rationality sees professional practice as a process of problem-solving (Schön 1983). As professional practice is moving away from problem-solving to problem setting, it is imperative that the paradigm of professional practice moves away from Technical Rationality as well. Along with the paradigm shift, the positivist epistemology of practice becomes less applicable (Schön 1983).

In addition to clear cut situations, professional practice also deals with problems that are unclear and uncertain.

When the ends are confused and conflicting, there is as yet no “problem” to solve. A conflict of ends cannot be resolved by the use of techniques derived from applied research. It is rather through the non-technical process of framing the problematic situation that we may organise and clarify both the ends to be achieved and the possible means to achieving them. (Schön 1983, p. 41)

Instead of major and minor professions, Schön (1983) proposed the varied topography of professional practice: the “high, hard ground” (Schön 1983, p. 42) where situations are clear and practitioners can make use of scientific theory and the “swampy lowland” (Schön 1983, p. 42) where the situations are confusing and cannot be solved using technical knowledge. A profession deals with problems in both the high ground and lowlands, however it is the practitioner who chooses where to situate his or her practice. Occupational therapy is a profession that has both elements.

2.1.2. The Professional Knowledge Base of Occupational Therapy

In relation to its knowledge base, occupational therapy would be considered as a minor profession in Glazer's (1974) categorisation. In part, this is caused by the societal perception that it is not as important compared to medicine and its lack of its own theoretical base (Etzioni 1969; Rivett 1997), relying heavily on the knowledge established by others such as medicine and psychology (Wilcock 1999). This treatment of occupational therapy is evident in the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act (1960), highlighting its secondary status to medicine. Despite being under the protection and regulation of the HCPC later, occupational therapy is still grouped under the umbrella term "Allied Health Professionals" which suggests that these professions are more similar, hence deserving to be collectively referred to, and less distinct than medicine and nursing (Clouston and Whitcombe 2008).

The indeterminate situations that occupational therapy finds itself in makes it hard to be recognised as a profession with its own knowledge base by society. However, the profession has turned to occupational science, to separate its theoretical base from that of others (Clouston and Whitcombe 2008), validating itself as a full-fledged profession by its own right (Creek 2014; 2003). Though it is important to occupational therapy practice, occupational science is still considered nascent and is still insufficient as a scientific knowledge base considering the wide variety of settings occupational therapists find themselves in (Estabrooks et al. 2004).

Within the profession, there is an appreciation of people as unique individuals with their own set of strengths, weaknesses, and circumstances. In other words, each service user is a new context in practice, with his or her unique sets of circumstances. Relying solely on scientific knowledge is insufficient in occupational therapy practice to deal with problems in the "swampy lowlands" (Schön 1983, p. 42). Indeterminate situations not cited in textbooks make up a large part of occupational therapy practice.

Technical knowledge complemented with implicit knowledge (Kinsella 2007a; Schön 1987) help to successfully negotiate effective interventions that are sensitive to the service users' needs and are thoughtful of their circumstances and strengths. Technical or explicit knowledge in occupational therapy refers to the academic knowledge of the workings of the human body, the understanding of occupational therapy models of practice and practical skills required in the profession. Generally, technical knowledge can be obtained from textbooks and taught in lectures. Implicit knowledge in professional practice is

Implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict. (Schön 1983, p. 49)

Implicit knowledge is synonymous to Polanyi's (1966) term, tacit knowledge. Tacit or implicit knowledge refers to things we did not know that we know already. Argyris and Schön (1978) described this as:

What we display when we recognise one face from thousands without being able to say how we do so, when we experience an intimation of a discovery we cannot put into words. (Argyris and Schön 1978, p. 10)

Polanyi's (1966) work assumed that 'we know more than we can tell' (Polanyi 1966, p. 4). According to Argyris and Schön (1978), this tacit knowledge is crucial for understanding theories-in-use which are the theories which practitioners base their professional actions on. These theories are constructed using both technical and tacit knowledge and are apparent in their actions (Kinsella 2007a). Tacit knowledge is key to reflection-in-action, where the practitioner examines the experience as it unfolds and then reacts on the spot, informed by this analysis (Finlay 2008), without being fully aware of the knowledge or of how it is used. In professional practice, some situations that are unexpected and require quick judgement and an immediate response. In these situations, tacit knowledge and reflection-in-action inform these actions

reflexively (Schön 1983). Occupational therapy students are expected to identify this implicit knowledge as part of their development (COT 2014b).

Schön (1987), drawing on Dewey (1938), noted that professional practice is artistic. The artistry of practice in occupational therapy practice is explained by Wong et al. (2016).

This aesthetic nature is significant in occupational therapy practice where every client is treated as a unique individual and versatility and sensitivity to the client's circumstances is the crux of an effective intervention plan in occupational therapy. The artistry of practice is largely tacit and can leave many practitioners unsettled as they struggle to find a clear explanation of this artful competence they often find themselves demonstrating. (Wong et al. 2016, p. 475)

Such confusion about one's artistry in practice is reflected in Boyd and Fales' (1983) research participants' comment:

I know that I reflect and I consider myself a reflective person, but I have never thought about it and I am not exactly sure what it is that I do. (Boyd and Fales 1983, p. 99)

Occupational therapists find themselves working in the lowlands where both technical and tacit knowledge are crucial for artistic practice. Because of the tacit components of practice, practitioners find it hard to articulate clearly how they have achieved such artistry, often attributing this to professional instinct refined over years of experience (Wong et al. 2016). Tacit knowledge is a result of one's wealth of experience of dealing with indeterminate situations. Reflection is the process of making this implicit knowledge more overt (Boniface 2002) such that the practitioners become more aware of their practice and elements of it that make them competent, or incompetent, professionals.

2.2. Importance of Reflective Practice in Holistic, Client-Centred Care

Because of the nature of the profession, occupational therapy aims to provide holistic client-centred care to service users (COT 2015). The nature of the knowledge required for such a practice is the reason behind the importance of reflection to the profession.

The way the profession has defined itself has allowed it to concern itself with a wide variety of responsibilities. The concerns of occupational therapy are more than merely the physical afflictions of the illness or condition. In describing occupational therapy as a caring profession, Devereaux stated that:

It is our responsibility to know and understand the emotions of illness, to be sensitive to the many variations of these emotional manifestations in patient behaviour, and to acknowledge this in empathic, yet therapeutic, responses as an integral part of our treatment. (Devereaux 1984, p. 791)

There is an appreciation of service users as unique individuals with their own set of strengths and weaknesses and circumstances (WFOT 2012b); in other words, no service user is the same. This understanding is the driver behind the provision of care that is sensitive to the needs of the service user, i.e. client-centred care.

Practising in such a profession also means that every case is considered different and unique. It thus becomes hard to apply the same approach to other service users or rely on textbook case studies to guide practice. The occupational therapist is required to examine his or her practice, understand why it had gone well or poorly and learn from the experience. They are then applied in the other cases where applicable. It is not so much of repeating good and avoiding bad practices as understanding what made that practice work or fail and applying this understanding in future practice.

Reflection and practice share a close relationship in the health and social care milieu. Reflection pushes practitioners to refine their tacit knowledge in the professional context, encouraging professional development (Holly 1989; Saylor 1990; Jarvis 1992; Moon 2004).

Reflection develops one as a person and a professional (Wald et al. 2009; Jarvis 1992; Saylor 1990). In settings where the role of occupational therapy is still emerging, reflection can help develop this professional identity and role (Booth and Nelson 2013; Wald et al. 2009). Professional development encouraged by reflection is important to occupational therapy practice (COT 2014a). The reflective process is made difficult in occupational therapy education by the fact that students need to develop implicit knowledge, which they often find hard to express, while simultaneously appreciating the aesthetic nature of occupational therapy practice. Regardless, this professional development is so important that the HCPC (2016b) and RCOT (COT 2014b) have taken measures to ensure that occupational therapists are actively reflecting. This has led to a culture where reflections are to be made explicit and assessed so that they can be used as evidence of continuing professional development (CPD).

2.2.1. Monitoring of Reflective Ability

Appropriate ethical considerations and professional conduct are expected of health and social care staff (Beauchamp and Childress 2001). However, in England, the Mid Staffordshire Public Inquiry report (Francis 2013) and the Winterbourne View Hospital report (Department of Health 2012) revealed evidence of unprofessional behaviours and unethical practices in the health setting. The regulatory bodies such as HCPC (2013) protect the public from such practices by scrutinising practitioners under their purview. One way of doing so is through monitoring their registrants' reflective practice which is understood to lead to more ethical practices (Fish and Boniface 2012).

Alongside ethical practices, the HCPC (2016b) also expects its practitioners to demonstrate professional competence through remaining current with developments in the practice setting.

Constant developments in the field require practitioners to keep up to date so as to provide top quality care to their service users (Brockbank and McGill 1998; Khanna 2004). A method of demonstrating such professional development is using reflection, which is also a key strategic action to improve the quality of care in the NHS as noted in a recent report (Ham et al. 2016).

In relation to the allied health professions such as occupational therapy, the HCPC and the RCOT have encouraged, and indeed require, their practitioners to utilise and demonstrate reflection (COT 2015; HCPC 2016b). At present there are 38,212 occupational therapists registered under the HCPC (2018). The HCPC (2016a) requires its registrants to renew their registration every two years and part of this process is to confirm that they have met the standards of continuing professional development. Since 2008, a random sample of two and a half percent of registrants is selected in a CPD audit where they are expected to submit a portfolio which illustrates their participation in CPD activities and how they have met the CPD standards (HCPC 2016a). As part of the evidence of their development, registrants are encouraged to use reflective accounts to demonstrate how the activities they have taken part in have led to better quality in their practice.

While the HCPC regulates and audits the practitioners, the professional body, RCOT also known previously as COT, ensures that its registrants are indeed developing professionally. The RCOT pushes for reflective thinking as a core method to professional development especially in the recent revision of its Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct document for occupational therapists (COT 2015) and the Code of Continuing Professional Development document in 2014 (COT 2014a). The RCOT highlighted that an occupational therapist's reflective thinking needs to involve his or her personal values, beliefs and attitudes, professional capability, practice setting and relevant policies (COT 2015).

Learning and development opportunities occur in both professional and personal areas of life and may be formal or informal. These experiences can support and evidence

professional development if considered through a critically reflective approach and applied to occupational therapy practice. (COT 2015, p. 41)

Participation in developmental opportunities and activities is not sufficient as evidence of professional development and needs to be supplemented with reflective thinking on how it is related to one's practice for it to be considered. According to the RCOT, reflective thinking synthesises the "ideas and application of all professional development activities" to the benefit of the service users (COT 2015, p. 41). In addition, occupational therapists are to demonstrate how they have developed their critical reflective thinking skills throughout their professional career. The RCOT also states that occupational therapists need to undertake "systematic formal reflections" in the form of supervision and annual appraisals (COT 2015, p. 42). This 2015 revision of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct suggests that the RCOT is now taking a more assertive stance on the importance of reflection in occupational therapy.

This expectation and requirement to be able to reflect are part of WFOT's (2008) entry-level requirements of students. Occupational therapy curricula thus require students to learn about, demonstrate and be assessed on their reflective ability to become qualified practitioners.

2.3. Occupational Therapy Curricula

The development of students as professional therapists is the ethos of occupational therapy education (COT 2014b; WFOT 2008). With this understanding, skills and knowledge imparted during the curriculum are designed to encourage the professional development of occupational therapy students.

Cardiff University, for example, offers two pre-qualification occupational therapy courses: a three-year BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy course and an accelerated two-year Post-Graduate Diploma Occupational Therapy course. In Cardiff University, alongside understanding of anatomy, students learn about the philosophy and role of an occupational therapist, occupational therapy theories that underpin practice and the occupational engagement of an

individual across the life span (COT 2014b; Cardiff University 2012; WFOT 2008). Students are also introduced to reflective practice and aspects of professional development via keynote lectures and they are graded on their reflections along with their demonstration of therapeutic skills during their placements.

Practice education or placement is an important feature of all occupational therapy programmes in the UK (COT 2014b) and the world through WFOT (2008). To qualify as a practitioner in the UK occupational therapy students are required to log one thousand hours of practice in a supportive environment (COT 2014b; HCPC 2013). The purpose of practice education in occupational therapy education is to prepare students to become competent practitioners (Knightbridge 2014), who can remain relevant in the rapidly changing health and social service system (Hocking and Ness 2002). Practice education has been shown to contribute to professional development, improve preparedness for practice and influence future practice choices (Doherty et al. 2009; Hodgetts et al. 2007; Crowe and Mackenzie 2002). A practice educator supervises students when they are on placement. These educators are responsible for assessing and grading the student's performance against a list of competencies when on placement (Cardiff University 2013). In Cardiff University (2012), occupational therapy students are expected to demonstrate skills with increasing proficiency as they gather more experience in practice. Therefore, the grade descriptors for placement become more demanding as the student goes on more placements (Cardiff University 2012).

In some occupational therapy curricula, problem-based learning (PBL) is inherent throughout the curriculum (Cardiff University 2012). PBL is the use of case studies, as initial triggers for learning such that critical thinking can be applied iteratively to achieve a new understanding of the case, theory, and practice. Information is consolidated over time and at the same time, the student develops his or her understanding (Clouston and Whitcombe 2007; Boud 1985). PBL is often undertaken as a collective effort in groups of seven to eleven students. Apart from the

learning of the topic, students learning through the PBL method also get a chance to observe learning styles of others in their group and have the opportunity to acquire knowledge in alternative ways (Holen 2000). Students also develop social skills in the process which will be transferable to their ability to interact with service users in the practice environment (Holen 2000). Most importantly, PBL offers a method of learning that closely resembles learning that a practising occupational therapist experiences at work in a safe and supportive environment in the university (Holen 2000). Hence this can ease the transition from the university into practice settings upon qualifying as a registered occupational therapist.

2.4. Conclusion

Occupational therapy has come a long way since its origin in the eighteenth century. In the UK, it has been regarded as a profession since the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act (1960). However, its role in the health and social care settings appear to differ in different countries, departments, and health settings. In addition, this professional identity can sometimes be interpreted to overlap with that of nurses and other allied health professions.

As a profession, occupational therapy mostly deals with indeterminate situations where the solutions are not very clear. On top of relying on technical knowledge, occupational therapists must make use of their tacit knowledge as part of their daily professional practice. Tacit knowledge is implicit and hard to articulate; therefore, it is hard to teach or can even be unteachable. However, reflection on practice experience can allow the practitioner to make this implicit knowledge explicit.

Additionally, ethical practice and professional development is expected of occupational therapists and this is often facilitated by reflective thinking. As reflection is evidently of great importance to the profession, the international professional body, WFOT, the UK occupational therapy regulatory body, HCPC and professional body, RCOT, have made reflective practice a core component of occupational therapy practice and education. Before one can be recognised

as a registered occupational therapist, one must show evidence of reflective thinking and practice and be assessed on them. Despite being of paramount importance in occupational therapy practice, reflection is not an easy process nor is it a straightforward concept. This is further explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3. Reflection and Dialogic Reflection

Reflection is understood in this thesis as the intellectual, emotional, and value-driven exploration of a situation or thought. Reflection is an elaborate process of understanding one's experience in the world with an in-depth analysis of how the experience relates to one's values and perception of the world (Dewey 1933). It is a notoriously difficult term to define (Eraut 1994; Kinsella 2009) because many theorists understand it differently and practitioners of reflective practice understand it in their own way as it is used in their own practice.

Despite the lack of consensus on the definition of reflection (Lee and Tan 2004), research has revealed that reflection engenders professional development (Holly 1989; Saylor 1990; Jarvis 1992; Moon 2004; Wald et al. 2009; Booth and Nelson 2013). Hence, it is of great importance in many professions. This importance is recognised especially by the HCPC. The RCOT encourages and enforces that occupational therapists are to demonstrate their development through reflective thinking (COT 2014a; COT 2015). In addition, occupational therapists are expected to show how their reflective thinking have developed throughout their career (COT 2014a; COT 2015).

As a result of regulation and the pursuit of professional development, reflection is treated as a learning tool (Russell 2005) and evidence of development (COT 2014a). This concept of reflection seeps into the pre-registration occupational therapy curricula as educators teach occupational therapists to be the reflective practitioners that the HCPC and RCOT expects. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAAHE) is an independent body that ensures and advises on the quality of UK higher education (QAAHE 2016). In their benchmark statement, occupational therapy programmes are expected to develop reflective practitioners who are able

to reflect on their performance and the limitations of their practice (QAAHE 2001). This benchmark statement is reference material for the development of occupational therapy programmes in higher education institutes, acknowledging the minimum requirements of statutory regulatory bodies that need to be incorporated into the design of programmes (QAAHE 2001).

However, viewing reflection as a learning tool is not only reductive in essence, it has also resulted in a culture where reflection is treated as something deliberate and artificial (Russell 2005). This culture of reflection encourages reflection to be taught in methods that can be considered rote (Wong et al. 2016) which in turn leads to a reductive understanding of reflection by emerging occupational therapists, perpetuating a vicious cycle. This reduces the elaborate process of understanding the world from one's experience in it to a method of problem-solving or a quick and dirty method for professional development (Wong et al. 2016). The concern here is that the way that reflection is currently treated would lead to a paradoxical situation where reflection is being used in an unreflective manner, becoming an empty meaningless phrase (Kinsella 2009). While reflection can be a problematic concept, reflection in the dialogic sense has been suggested as a better alternative (Boniface 2002), albeit theories about it are rather scarce.

3.1. Bridging the Theory and Practice Divide with Reflection

Practice education or placement is an important aspect of health and social care professions' curricula as it serves to supplement the knowledge and skills taught in the university. The purpose of practice education is to create a supportive environment in clinical settings to allow students to apply what they have been taught. Learning needs to be done in the context of its application (Dewey 1933) and this is especially so in health and social care education. Unintentionally, there is a mismatch between what that is taught in university and what actually

happens in practice settings (Bossers et al. 1999). As a result, a discursive gap between theory and practice is established. However, one purpose of reflection is to bridge the gap between the student and the practice environment (Schön 1983; Crist et al. 1998), however this is also rather difficult in reality.

In occupational therapy education, and health and social care education in general, the curriculum is not merely about teaching scientific knowledge. Professional development forms an integral part of the curriculum and it is purposed to furnish emerging practitioners with a holistic understanding of practice and the underpinning theories (Bossers et al. 1999). In occupational therapy curricula, the foundation of clinical practice such as human anatomy and developing therapeutic interventions is complemented with professional behaviours and knowledge such as ethics, reflective practice and professional values and philosophy (Bossers et al. 1999). However, learning these modules in a university setting can be rather false and sterile and not reflective of the messiness of practice (Eraut 1994). Educational institutions have progressed to a point where they are able to offer a safe learning environment which can be sometimes hardly relatable to the reality of practice (Eraut 1994). Gold standard practice is taught and encouraged in university which some students may find impractical on their placements due to barriers in the settings such as time constraints and policies. This is rather confusing for the student as there is an incongruence between what is taught and what is experienced on placement. Students and even fresh graduates find difficulty in bridging the theory and practice gap in spite of practice education being part of the curriculum (Ajani and Moez 2011).

Schön (1983) proposed that reflection is one way to do so, however, it is not easy to reflect in practice settings. Technical and tacit knowledge inform one's practice (Schön 1983). Despite being implicit in nature, tacit knowledge can be made explicit through reflection (Boniface 2002). Even though one of the aims of practice education is to encourage reflection, it is not the

most conducive place to do so. Reflection requires a “surprise” (Schön 1983, p. 56) or a degree of “perplexity” (Dewey 1933, p. 23) and “experimental action” (Schön 1983, p. 269). These are all anathema to settings that prioritise efficiency (Argyris and Schön 1978). It is difficult for students to engage in reflective practice in environments that are unable to accommodate actions that are deemed experimental and inefficient. Thus, this theory and practice gap is further perpetuated.

Reflection is an important component of occupational therapy education, however teaching and learning this concept is made difficult when it is so nebulous. Many have critiqued its lack of clarity of what it means and its process. Despite the lack of clarity, some professions such as education and nursing have taken on the concept of reflection and theorised its process for use in practice (Gibbs 1988; King and Kitchener 1994; Fish et al. 1991; Korthagen and Vasalos 2005; Johns 2013).

3.2. Conceptual Confusion

Reflection, being an un-unified concept (Gilroy 1993; Kinsella 2009), results in reflective practice being ill-defined (Kember et al. 2001) and there is a lack of consensus on its definition (Ghaye and Ghaye 1998; Lee and Tan 2004). There are, therefore, multiple definitions of reflection and often these are different largely due to the theoretical underpinning used by the theorist. In addition, conflicting or divergent theories about reflection further perpetuate this confusion. In fact, reflection is often used synonymously with different terms as a result such as reflective thinking (Dewey 1933), reflective practice (Schön 1983), reflective observation (Kolb 2014), critical reflection (Mezirow 1990), reflective judgement (King and Kitchener 1994). It appears that the word “reflection” is almost treated as a prefix or a suffix for a term to imply a deeper or as Dewey (1933, p. 3) had defined reflection, “better” way of thinking.

Regardless, reflection and reflective practice have been adopted rather widely by educators, paramedics, nurses, doctors and other health and social care professions (Bullough and Gitlin

1989; Fish et al. 1991; Ghaye and Lillyman 1997; Donaghy and Morss 2000). Despite the broad use of reflection and reflective practice, practitioners who are familiar with its use, even amongst those belonging to the same profession, are unable to offer a common description of the concept (Ghaye and Ghaye 1998; Mackintosh 1998; McLaughlin 1999; Newman 1999; Kinsella 2009).

3.2.1. The Nebulous Process of Reflection as Intended by Schön

Often, in the discussion of this conceptual morass, fingers point to Schön and his lack of a clear definition of reflective practice and how it can be conducted (Greenwood 1993; Eraut 1994; Bengtsson 1995; Kinsella 2009).

Reflection-in-action is the act of reflecting during an action without interrupting it (Schön 1983). Schön (1983) distinguishes this from reflection-on-action which is conducted after the action has taken place and requires one to stop and think. While Schön (1983; 1987) did not offer a formal definition of what he meant by reflection, in both *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön 1983) and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (Schön 1987), he attempted to convey process and the appearance of reflection-in-action through various examples. However, these examples did not show a uniform process of reflection, rather they demonstrated that reflection can be approached and used in different ways (Schön 1987; 1983).

This however attracted strong criticism from his readers. Bengtsson (1995, p. 29) referred to his work as “influential but most unclear”. Ecclestone (1996) noted that reflective practice had revealed unaddressed conceptual and practical confusion. Munby and Russell critiqued that:

There is virtually no elaboration of the psychological realities of reflection-in-action... His work is not sufficiently analytical and articulated to enable us to follow the connections that must be made between elements of experience and elements of cognition so that we may see how reflection-in-action might be understood to occur (Munby and Russell 1989, p. 74).

Eraut (1994) bemoaned about the amount of effort spent on elaborating on the examples and he indicated that Schön (1983) has still not offered a coherent view of reflection through them. He even went as far as to write:

To rescue Schön's original contribution from this morass, I believe it is necessary to take the term 'reflection' out of his theory, because it has caused nothing but confusion (Eraut 1994, p. 148).

In Schön's (1987) defence, he never intended to offer a unified theory of reflection:

I have tried in Part II to show how practitioners in very different sorts of professions reveal an underlying similarity in the art of their practice, and especially in the artful inquiry by which they sometimes deal with situations of uncertainty, instability and uniqueness. (Schön 1983, p. 268)

I have so far stressed the similarities of pattern in various arts of reflective professional practice, but there are also importance differences. (Schön 1983, p. 270)

Schön (1983) then went on to suggest that the examples of reflective practice differed because of the practitioners' past experiences, values, theories that they use to guide their practice and the way they frame their role in practice settings. Schön (1983, p. 274) concluded that "the nature of the reflective conversation varies, from profession to profession, and from practitioner to practitioner". It is rather apparent that reflection was deliberately left nebulous due to Schön's respect for the differences of each profession and professional. Aggregating a unified theory on reflection-on-action would have done injustice to the unique work and thought processes required in the profession.

With reference to constructivism, Schön (1987, p. 33) referred to knowing-in-action as "embedded in the socially and institutionally structured context shared by a community of practitioners". Schön (1987) suggested that professional knowing-in-action, perhaps also applicable to the field of occupational therapy, is socially constructed and bounded or emancipated by the practice environment. He insinuated that this knowing-in-action does not

necessarily need to be in line with that of other professionals in the same field of practice since it is constructed and not directed. The cry for more clarity in the process of reflection-in-action hence misses this point that Schön (1983) was trying to make.

In summary, the confusion did not come from the works of Schön. He had taken up the constructivist epistemology in his theory of reflection-in-action (Kinsella 2006), consequently and deliberately left it nebulous, respecting the unique nature of each profession. This lack of clarity, while intended, had caused some confusion about how one should go about reflecting in practice.

3.2.2. Reflection as a Rational Thinking Process Theorised by Dewey

While Schön (1983) had offered a nebulous concept of reflection, Dewey's (1933) theory of reflective thinking is clearer and rational. In Dewey's (1933) theory of reflective thinking, he emphasised that the thinking feeds into the doing which feedbacks into the thinking, it is a continuous process. Dewey (1933) believed that there are many forms of thinking, however, reflective thought is the more intellectual and esoteric variant.

Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought. (Dewey 1933, p. 6)

The purpose of reflective thought is thus to confirm or refute the suggested belief. The belief here points to the guiding principles which one follows when interacting with the world. When circumstances are such that these beliefs are applied and used without question, reflective thought does not occur. However, when the situation conflicts or deviates from one's belief, when one is forced to reassess one's belief, reflective thought then refers to the act of reconsideration of these beliefs.

Two sub-processes are involved in triggering reflective thought: a state of perplexity and an enquiry directed at uncovering facts to challenge or support the suggested belief. Reflective

thought requires a shock, a situation perplexing enough to challenge the mind such that it triggers an uncertainty about one's beliefs. One then recalls and recognises the facts that will help resolve this perplexing situation. These facts can corroborate with the past beliefs or suggest that there is a need to change one's beliefs (Dewey 1933).

3.2.3. The Implications of the Conceptual Confusion

The wide use of reflection and its related vocabulary, despite the confusion, may eventually create a disappointing scene in the practice milieu and all fields that employ its theories. Reflection is so often used glibly in literature and the practice settings without any analytical scrutiny (Clarke et al. 1996; Newman 1999) that it is ironic when it is used in an unreflective manner (Bengtsson 1995). McLaughlin (1999, p. 9) wrote that "'reflective practitioner' is often used as a vague slogan rather than a concept whose meaning and implications are well thought through and worked out". Bauer (1991) noted that reflection is used so loosely and applied without any understanding of its nature and the design of its function. Kinsella (2009) went further to note that:

Reflective practice is in danger of becoming a catch-all term for an ill-defined process... so broad and idiosyncratic is its application that some have suggested that 'reflective practice' is in danger of becoming an empty, meaningless phrase, that at once means everything and nothing. (Kinsella 2009, p. 4–5)

Ixer (1999) went as far as to denounce reflection, considering the confusion and contradiction that it has caused.

In the field of education, where Dewey (1933) wrote about reflective thinking and where reflection first became a popular concept, the implications of the demeaning of the concept have started to show. Zeichner (1994) noted that reflection had become a fad and teachers, regardless of their ideological orientations, had jumped on the bandwagon and focused their time and energy in the pursuit of whatever form of reflective teaching practice they have been told about without understanding how that may conflict with or align with their beliefs. Rogers

(2002) later felt that the lack of clarity of what reflection meant had resulted in the loss of its value in teaching.

Reflection can be taught rather reductively at times in education (Wong et al. 2016). Rather than for achieving professional development as described previously, reflection is taught as a method of evaluation of an experience or activity. This reductive use of reflection strips the elaborate process to merely description and analysis, a method of problem-solving.

Such ideas can sometimes find their way into education as educators are made to teach something so nebulous and students try to understand something so elaborate. This concept can be imparted in ways that appear to be didactic, and thus taught in its reductive form. It is then not surprising that it is used superficially as well in the practice environment (Wong et al. 2016). This could potentially result in a generation of unreflective practitioners.

Jones (2008) was fearful that what had happened in the field of education and nursing portends a similar fate for the field of paramedic education if the lack of clarity is not addressed. This fear is indeed warranted for reflective practice had already shown some problems in the field of nursing. Johns (2013) wrote that:

The words reflection and reflective practice are used glibly, as if reflection is the most normal thing in the world requiring little skill or guidance. I recently met a district nurse at my local village fete. My partner mentioned that I was a bit of a guru in reflective practice. The district nurse recoiled and said she hated reflective practice, that she had had it shoved down her throat. I smile. I could imagine her experience of being taught reflection in an instrumental way of using a model of reflection by unreflective teachers. I know this because I see it everywhere. (Johns 2013, p. 2)

The above account is not a one-off case. There appears to be a certain sense of dissent in the field of nursing about the usefulness of reflective practice (Burton 2000). Gilbert (2001), drawing on Foucault (1980), argued that reflective practice is a form of hegemony over nurses, and later extended it to all of the health and social care professionals. It can be argued that under the

guise of continuing professional development, the professional and regulatory body monitor the activity of professionals through advocating reflective practice. Foucault (1980) suggested that this surveillance was omnipresent and can appear to be ethical when it is made explicit. This manifests in the form reflective practice and clinical supervision in the case of health and social care professionals (Gilbert 2001; Clouder and Sellars 2004).

Gilbert (2001) believed that surveillance in the form of reflective practice (Clouder and Sellars 2004), is reliant on the practitioner's ability to self-manage, write or talk about their activities "in a way that they accept responsibility themselves both for the agenda and the consequential actions" (Gilbert 2001, p. 202). Professionals reveal the truth about themselves and lay bare, through reflective practice, confessing to the agenda and rationale for their actions which may be motivated by the professional or regulatory bodies, more so than the individual practitioners. Through reflective practice, the agendas of these professional or regulatory bodies are being internalised and echoed through the actions of individuals, regardless of whether it is in line with their own ideology (Gilbert 2001). In the case of the reflective practice agenda, it is "shoved down her (the practitioners') throat" (Johns 2013, p. 2) and becomes something that the professionals have to do, to demonstrate continuing professional development to the regulatory bodies, even if it is something they may not believe in (Zeichner 1994) through moral obligation over their actions (Gilbert 2001). Schön (1983) argued that professionals need to reflect. Dewey (1984) took this further by noting the ability to reflect and express their experiences authenticates the professional. Gilbert (2001), drawing on Foucault (1981), referred to this as a confession. The need to reflect on one's practice is instilled through health and social care education; hence it is so pervasive and subtle (Gilbert 2001) that it is natural and part of daily practice.

The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many points, is deeply ingrained in us that we no longer perceive it as an effect of power that constrains us: on the contrary,

it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface (Foucault 1981, p. 60).

Reflective practice in nursing and health and social care can be perceived as a form of surveillance (Gilbert 2001; Clouder and Sellars 2004); in paramedic education, there is a fear that reflective practice will lose its value due to its lack of clarity (Jones 2008), while in teaching, this was thought to have already happened (Zeichner 1994). The use of reflection is so prevalent in today's culture, sometimes without a clear understanding of what it stands for, whilst new theories of reflection are being generated without a unified definition. Reflection and reflective practice may be the cause of their own erosion in the future practices if this confusion is perpetuated.

3.3. Dialogic Reflection

The literature has indicated that the typical lecture-and-listen method is not an effective way to teach and learn about reflection (Russell 2005). Reflection is nebulous and ill-defined (Schön 1983). Unlike the study of human anatomy, there is no right and wrong answer to it (Wong et al. 2016). It should not be straightforward and also should not be treated as such in education. Learning about reflection and how to do it is important to occupational therapy practice. However, reflecting on what reflection means to the individual and his or her practice takes precedence. Unfortunately, this answer is only found in oneself and not determined by the regulatory body, professional body nor the higher education institutions. Thus, the only way to do so is to practice it and reflecting on the meaning of the reflective process to the individual (Russell 2005), conducting a meta-reflection.

Arguably, reflection cannot be taught in a rote manner (Wong et al. 2016). The concept can be introduced to students, and they can also be lectured on the theories about it. However, it should be something that students learn from experiencing it according to Russell (2005). Schön's (1983) reflective practice paradox also indicated that to understand reflective practice,

one has to practice it. This is perhaps an idea that is challenging to educators that prefer the more instrumental and didactic method of teaching where one has to understand before one can practice.

Reflection should not be taught, rather it should be guided (Russell 2005). However, this begs the question of who is best to do so. Boniface's (2002) study indicated the supervisor may not be an ideal person to do so as he or she may sit in judgement of the student from a position of superior knowledge, experience and power over the student's academic path. If reflection is something that is required to be experienced, developed over time, guided but not supervised, then perhaps it is possible that reflection in a peer setting would be the best environment to learn reflection and be supported on it.

3.3.1. Reflection as A Dialogic Process

Reflection is often seen as a monological process (Clouder and Sellars 2004). Schön's (1983; 1987) examples of reflection in his works depicted scenes where professionals appear to be talking to a superior however the reflective conversation is between the professional and the situation, not with the superior. Johns (2013) described that reflection is necessarily on the self while Boud et al. (1985) described reflection as a process that one conducts in isolation. Dewey (1933) called reflection as reflective thinking as it is an internal cognitive process. There are strong arguments for the reflective process to be something implicit and self-driven.

However, there are also indications that reflection can perhaps be treated as something that can be done with someone else as well. Boniface's (2002) study suggested that there are certain people that individuals are more comfortable reflecting with. Driscoll (1994) encouraged nurses to make use of group situations such as discharge planning as settings for reflections to occur. Gibbs (1988) mentioned that stages of his reflective cycle can be done with different groups of people. Fish et al. (1991) provided a model of reflection for use between the teacher and student.

Research has suggested that reflection can perhaps be done with others (Gibbs 1988; Driscoll 1994), however, little is done to explicate the reflective process that occurs when it is done as a dialogue. In comparison, reflection as a monologue is widely theorised and utilised. Theories that suggested that it could be conducted in groups provided some explanation on the process of reflection itself that one of the members in the conversation undertakes but they do not consider the dialogic aspect of it (Gibbs 1988; Driscoll 1994). As a result, they seem to have only provided another theory of reflection and not reflection as treated as a dialogue.

3.3.1.1. Glazer et al. (2004)

Glazer et al.'s (2004) research into collaborative reflection indicated that it is valuable to the development of teachers. Their research also showed that facilitation is important to drive the group and to ensure a safe environment. However, the role of the facilitator can shift in the group as members start to take on the leadership role. Though initially designed to be structured, their groups had behaved differently; one group designed the group reflection to be the structured linearly, brainstorming, grouping topics for discussion, reflection and finally closure. The other group, however, found it hard to follow the linear structure as designed by the first group and approached it more dynamically. Nonetheless, Glazer et al. (2004) had not theorised the process of reflecting in this manner nor did they offer a more in-depth explanation about the dynamics and how the interaction had resulted in reflection. Glazer et al.'s (2004) research also seemed to have focused on finding a solution to problems that the members had voiced and it is questionable whether their use of reflection is for problem-solving or professional or personal development. There is little indication of how the teachers had developed even though they noted that it was a valuable and positive experience. Hence while they had offered suggestions on how it can be carried out, they had contributed little to understanding the dynamic process of reflecting in groups, the personal or professional development it may have triggered and what actually happens when the reflective process is approached collaboratively.

Glazer et al. (2004) carried out their research in two steps, first to build a framework for collaborative reflection and then to test it out. Initially, a group of five teachers and three researchers met to explore the nature of professional reflection and to develop a process of reflection as productive professional development. These meetings were open-ended discussions and the collaborative group decided on the steps required to organise and structure collaborative reflection. These decisions were then tested with another different group of teachers and who met to reflect collaboratively as structured by the previous group. A final meeting was then devoted to the discussion about the process.

Glazer et al. (2004) had two distinct phases in their research: a design phase and an experimental phase. While I felt that it was collaborative to recruit participants to design the execution of the collaborative reflection, there was no continuity in the experimental phase because the group of participants involved in the design phase was different from that of the experimental phase. They have concluded that the process of the collaborative reflection had differed quite significantly from how it was initially designed. Perhaps the major cause of this was the fact that the participants who designed it did not experience it and those who experienced it were not involved in the designing phase. The lack of continuity throughout the entire research process is perhaps the reason behind incongruity between the intended design of the group reflection and the actual execution. The researchers also analysed collaborative reflection without collaborating with either group of participants. With reference to the paradigm of dialogic reflection discussed later in Chapter Four, I saw a clear mismatch between the method of research and the topic Glazer et al. (2004) intended to theorise.

3.3.1.2. Tigelaar et al. (2008)

Tigelaar et al. (2008) researched into the teacher interaction process and collaborative reflection process during peer meetings. Five experienced teachers and a teacher trainer met thrice to understand and improve their teaching practice. The meetings were held two months apart lasting forty-five minutes each. The meetings were videotaped and transcribed. The relationship

between the types of interaction and the content of collaborative reflections were analysed using two frameworks. The meetings were conducted using the following structure:

1. Phase one: Reading of all critical incidents submitted by members and one account was selected for discussion and analysis
2. Phase two: Clarifying questions were prepared over a short break, no solutions or alternatives were implied or suggested
3. Phase three: All clarifying questions were asked and answered by the presenter whose account had been selected in phase 1
4. Phase four: Analysis and advice was prepared over a short break
5. Phase five: Advice and analysis were given
6. Phase six: Positives and negatives of the advice and analysis were discussed
7. Phase seven: The presenter of the account selected the most suitable solution and analysis
8. Phase eight: Participants evaluated what had been discussed.

Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research appeared to contradict the natural process that Glazer et al.'s (2004) research group had preferred. It is also questionable if the interactions in Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research, while may appear to be collaborative, can be considered dialogic because of how each phase was isolated from each other. Such an approach was not indicative of any exchange of ideas and seemed rather one-sided where the participants reflected for the presenter rather than reflect with the presenter. Additionally, there was no indication of the use of reflection as more than a problem-solving method even though non-technical aspects such as emotions and morals were discussed. Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research failed to shed light on the collaborative process as they had claimed or show the value of reflecting in groups to the development of teachers, whether professionally or personally.

Unlike Glazer et al. (2004), Tigelaar et al. (2008) had designed their peer meeting using the critical incident method (Hendriksen 1997). This resulted in a highly structured process of reflection that was collaborative but perhaps not dialogic. Additionally, there is little equality in this reflective process because one incident was nominated out of five to be reflected upon, suggesting that some participants had experiences that are more worth reflecting upon than others. Similar to Glazer et al.'s (2004) research, the researchers did not participate in the collaborative reflection.

Glazer et al. (2004) and Tigelaar et al. (2008) were key influences of this research, both of whom had carried out their research in the form of peer meetings. While they served as suggestions as to how a research about dialogic reflection can be conducted, they also served as cautionary tales of the implications of approaching my research in an unco-operative manner.

Both Glazer et al. (2004) and Tigelaar et al. (2008) had not described their research paradigm or their research methodology even though they had detailed the process of conducting their research. From their research designs, I inferred that they were conducting peer meetings as a form of action research. However, both research designs were not participatory as the researchers were theorising dialogic reflection by studying the behaviours and actions of their participants. I found this rather troubling as having considered the paradigm of this research it would have been contradictory to craft an understanding about dialogic reflection in an unco-operative manner.

I had designed the research similar to how Glazer et al. (2004) and Tigelaar et al. (2008) had conducted theirs, however, there were some areas I had chosen to deviate from. Peer meetings appeared to be the trend in the research about the topic. Appreciating the nature of dialogic reflection and the paradigm of my research, I decided that this was the best method to conduct this research. However, unlike Glazer et al. (2004) and Tigelaar et al. (2008), I wanted the

research to involve the co-researchers as much as possible in my action research. Co-operative Inquiry hence became the obvious methodology of choice.

3.4. Conclusion

The literature review elicited that reflection, even when suggested that it could be done collaboratively, is still an internal and monologic process. There appeared to be some inherent difficulties in understanding reflection as a collaborative, dialogic process and how it contributes to one's development. While Glazer et al.'s (2004) and Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research had suggested methods in which it can be organised for teachers they had not explicated the dynamic nature of reflection in this manner. Burton (2000) had critiqued that

Nurses are now directed to reflect effectively and practice effectively. When there is scant evidence to support the use of reflection, why does the United Kingdom Central Council, English National Board for Nursing and Midwifery and Health Visiting and institutes of nurse education insist that nurses at all levels of experience reflect. (Burton 2000, p. 1)

While it is important to understand how to conduct dialogic reflection, the more important question to answer is if dialogic reflection will contribute any professional development to the participating individuals. If not, it renders the former question moot. It is vital that dialogic reflection steers clear from being a concept that is applied blindly in education, just because it is another variant of reflection and assumed to be beneficial to professional growth. The value of dialogic reflection was thus of great importance to this research.

Part Two: Developing This Study About Dialogic Reflection

This part of the thesis concerns the methodological considerations of this research. It introduces the research question along with the paradigm of this research. I also discuss my position on the purpose of enquiry. This guided me to developing a research study on dialogic reflection that was highly collaborative and reflective.

Chapter Four explains the research question and objectives. The participatory paradigm is introduced, and research methodologies is also discussed.

Chapter Five describes research as it was conducted, from literature review to conclusion of the action research groups.

Chapter 4. Paradigm and Purpose of Enquiry

As established earlier, although there is a considerable amount of literature on reflection, there is a paucity in literature relating to dialogic reflection *per se*. Some literature (Gibbs 1988; Fish et al. 1991; Boniface 2002; Glazer et al. 2004; Tigelaar et al. 2008) had suggested that reflection can be conducted dialogically, but there was little information regarding the dynamic interplay in a dialogic reflection. More recent research (Glazer et al. 2004; Tigelaar et al. 2008) had illustrated how it could be conducted. However, these research studies had not necessarily encouraged dialogic reflection as they had claimed. Furthermore, they were carried out in the field of education and the research in the use of dialogic reflection in the context of health and care is still sparse. The scarcity of research into dialogic reflection lead me to conduct a research to better understand it. Being an occupational therapist who had recently graduated, I felt impelled to investigate dialogic reflection in my own field and specifically with occupational therapy students.

I had initially termed what I currently refer to as dialogic reflection as collaborative reflection, as it was the term used by Glazer et al. (2004) and Tigelaar et al. (2008). However, as the research developed, it emerged that dialogic reflection was a better term for this research as it more accurately captures the reflective process that I mean. The reason for this change is further elaborated in the findings later in Chapter Six. In this thesis, I use dialogic reflection predominantly, except for when I am reporting the way I had written the research question and objectives and conducted the literature review for accuracy.

Thus, I initially developed the following research question:

How suitable is collaborative (or dialogic) reflection for occupational therapy students in their professional development?

The objectives of the study developed then were:

1. To understand the experience of engaging in collaborative (or dialogic) reflection from the perspective of student occupational therapists
2. To explore the potential of its use in occupational therapy education for professional development
3. To attempt to develop a model for the use of collaborative (or dialogic) reflection in occupational therapy education

As the first objective of this research, I sought to theorise dialogic reflection using a synthesis of the occupational therapy students' experience and theories to make sense of the process. While I had initially intended to understand dialogic reflection from the students' perspective, upon further consideration of the paradigm and methodology of this research, I had realised that it was important for me to also understand dialogic reflection from my own experience of it. This is further expanded upon later in this chapter and I will also show the changes I had made to the first objective of the study. Current theories (Gibbs 1988; Fish et al. 1991; Boniface 2002; Glazer et al. 2004; Tigelaar et al. 2008) available are insufficient to provide a satisfactory explanation of what dialogic reflection means and how it happens. It is often thought of as an extension of the monologic version of reflection and not as a unique method of reflection in its own right or deserving of a dedicated theoretical knowledge base. However, as Schön (1983) hinted, the best way to learn about reflection is to actually experience it (Wong et al. 2016). Therefore, it can be inferred that the best way to learn about dialogic reflection in the occupational therapy curriculum was perhaps to conduct dialogic reflection amongst the occupational therapy students and I, and understand dialogic reflection through our active engagement in it. Existing theories were then used to make sense of the experience of dialogic reflection, upon which the

theory of dialogic reflection was built. This resulted in a theory grounded in theory and experience.

The second objective of the research was to understand the possible value of dialogic reflection in occupational therapy education. It is not sufficient to understand the theory behind dialogic reflection as it does not imply that it would be valuable to the professional development of occupational therapy students. In addition to learning about its merits, it is also imperative to understand its problems for if the consequence of engaging in dialogic reflection is damaging to the professional development of occupational therapy students, then it would not be wise to encourage it in the curriculum.

Conditional on addressing the first two objectives, the last objective served to explore possible ways of incorporating dialogic reflection in occupational therapy curricula.

After deciding on the research aim and objectives, the next step was to design a research project that allowed me to achieve them. It was important that the research was conducted in a paradigm that appreciated the nature of dialogic reflection.

4.1. Paradigm

The paradigm, or worldview, is an overarching framework which serves to organise the approach to guide the development of the research and the research direction (Kuhn 1996). It represents a way of thinking and the beliefs and values that are shared by researchers in their own discipline (Schwandt 2001). Kuhn (1996) argued that while researchers are aware that concepts and theories should not be learned instrumentally, they do not usually make explicit the legitimacy of the research problem or solution, which would require them to declare the paradigm and methodology of their research. Polanyi (1962) suggested that these methodological and paradigmatic considerations often reside in the tacit dimension and since the researcher may not be aware of the implicit process that goes on, it is rarely made explicit in the research.

However, considering this research is about reflection, it is imperative that I, as the researcher, made these considerations explicit.

In consideration of a paradigm, I had to consider the philosophical assumptions (Patton 2002):

- Ontology – What do we believe about the nature of reality?
- Epistemology – How do we know what we know?
- Axiology – What is considered true?

Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) wrote about the selection of a paradigm, suggesting that paradigms are something like a road the researcher chooses to take to conduct the research. However, I questioned if this was the case for this research in particular. Rather than choosing a paradigm, I believed the research topic had already chosen its own paradigm, considering how this research was essentially an understanding of how one can learn and know from one's experience. Additionally, this knowing was more than just professional knowledge (Schön 1983), it also included personal beliefs, assumptions (Mezirow 1990) and way of thinking (Dewey 1933) for example. These forms of knowing suggested the ontology, epistemology and axiology of the research which led me to think that the paradigmatic approach to conducting this research was not within my control.

4.1.1. Epistemology

The epistemological consideration was of paramount importance for this research relative to the ontological and axiological considerations. As this consideration required me to explore the epistemic nature of reflection and dialogue, it also had a profound influence in my interpretation of the data. The epistemic exploration of reflection and dialogue had an impact not only on the decision on the paradigm of the research but also the findings of this research.

The epistemologies of the theories of reflection are often implicit (Schön 1983; Gibbs 1988; Fish et al. 1991). Kinsella (2006), Moon (2004) and Fenwick (2001) however considered reflection to be constructivist in its epistemology. Constructivism here refers particularly to the subjectivist

epistemology in this philosophical concept, where knowledge about the world is created with others through an internal cognitive process (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Mehay and Waters 2010). At the same time, when reflection is referred to more broadly as getting knowledge from one's experience, it can also be considered as rational or empiricist, depending on where the focus lies in the reflective process. Fenwick (2001) explained that reflection is constructivist because:

Individuals are understood to construct their own knowledge, through interaction with their environments... a learner is believed to construct, through reflection, a personal understanding of relevant structures of meaning derived from his or her action in the world (Fenwick 2001, pp. 9–10)

Constructivists believe that cognitive structures - one's network of knowledge and understanding and their associated feeling or emotions - are malleable (Moon 2004; Kinsella 2007a). They are responsive to new understandings elicited from new experiences and develop accordingly.

The state of the cognitive structure at a given time facilitates the selection and assimilation of new material of learning... it guides what we choose to pay attention to, what we choose to learn and how we make meanings of the material of learning. (Moon 2004, p. 17)

Therefore, through the constructivist lens, learning is less about the accumulation of knowledge and more about the transforming of concepts (Bowden and Marton 1998; Moon 2004).

Reflection is also constructivist because of the way knowledge is being assimilated in the process of learning. Kolb (2014) identified that the individual first lives through concrete experiences which he/she will reflect on, eliciting certain abstract conceptualisations which are incorporated into the cognitive structures. These newly learned concepts are then utilised in new situations. The experience is not assimilated directly as knowledge constructs, rather, it has to be deconstructed through reflective enquiry before the reconstruction of learned concepts can

occur. Learning only happens when the individual makes sense of the experience through reflective thought, links it to previous learning and transform his or her previous understanding (Fenwick 2001). This learning through reflection is thus demonstrated through one's action (Schön 1987).

Though Plato did not write about reflection explicitly, he offered a more rational view to the distilling of knowledge from experience (Jowett 1980). Plato argued that what one experiences are mere shadows of the truth (Jowett 1980). He believed that these experiences are opinions and it is only through thinking and dialectic, the Socratic method, that one can attain knowledge hence the truth. What one experiences through one's senses and one's untested beliefs of one's world are opinions, hence false, as they can mislead one to make false conclusions about the world. However, through rigorous intellectual interrogation of one's experience through the Socratic method, one is able to attain knowledge. The Socratic method is where the learner poses a question and tries to answer it himself. Someone else offers a contradictory example or answer and the learner then revises his or her answer in response. This answer and then contradicted again, and the learner comes up with a revised answer. This happens until the learner can come up with an answer that cannot be contradicted. As this answer can no longer be challenged, it is therefore 'true' and hence it is what Plato understands as knowledge. Therefore, Plato's rational approach to distilling knowledge from experience can also be viewed as a form of reflective thought. However, in Platonic rationalism (Jowett 1980), the experience and untested beliefs are of little value relative to knowledge that crystallises from them and the Socratic method of doing so.

Empiricism shifts the focus from the intellectual interrogation of the experience to the experience itself. Empiricism is the belief that the source of knowledge is our sensory experience of the world (Markie 2013). The difference between this and platonic rationalism is that knowledge lies in the experience itself and is not gained from the analytical process. Most, if not

all, reflective theories value the intellectual process of deconstructing an experience and one's premise (Mezirow 1981; Fenwick 2001). Experience, unlike pure rationalism, is the sole resource for knowledge development in empiricism. In Gibbs' (1988) model of reflection, the reflective cycle starts with an experience followed by an analysis of the emotional, practical and intellectual components of reflection. Emotion and thought is analysed procedurally in his model which suggests that they can be analysed in isolation of each other, favouring the concept of experience offered by empiricism. Hume (1748) believed that one's perception of the world is made up of ideas and impressions. Ideas here refer to thinking involved while impressions refer to feeling, with reference to our sensory experience and emotions. Locke (1690) understands perception as sensation and reflection. Sensation referring to the experience that occurs outside the mind and perceived through the senses. Reflection refers to the experience of the internal operations of the mind as it processes sensation. Knowledge in empiricism lies in sensory experience itself and not the analysis of it. Hence reflection from an empiricist stance focuses on understanding the different sensations rather than the extended analysis of how they are different to previous experiences like in the constructivist stance or analytical process itself like in the rationalist perspective.

Reflection, if considered as learning from experience, can be seen to be constructivist (Schön 1983; 1992; Moon 2004; Kinsella 2007a), rational (Jowett 1980; Schön 1983) and even empirical (Locke 1690; Hume 1748; Gibbs 1988). Nonetheless, instances, where theorists of reflection have explicitly, declared the epistemological position of their theory is rather rare. It appears that part of the difference in these many theories is their understanding of experience and how knowledge is gained from it.

Though reflection had been approached in multiple epistemologies, constructivism appeared to be most predominantly used (Schön 1983; Moon 2004; Kinsella 2009). Experience was an important consideration for this research. This was largely drawn from the fact that the subject

matter of concern was reflection. As a result, how experience could be examined and the type of knowing that is elicited from it would be key to the understanding of dialogic reflection. It was clear that the research would be under a paradigm that appreciates the importance of experience and knowledge gained from it.

However, constructivism did not seem to represent reflection completely because of how Schön (1983) had differentiated reflection-in-action from reflection-on-action. Goodman's (1978) constructivist theory on worldmaking was quite evident in reflection-on-action where one examines the experience after having experienced it (Schön 1983). However, Schön (1983) appeared to have dedicated most of his theory to understanding reflection-in-action rather than reflection-on-action. In fact, it was the ability to reflect-in-action that defined a reflective professional in his opinion. Reflection-in-action differs subtly in that the reflection occurs in the action rather than after. While subtle, this made a difference in the consideration of the epistemology of reflection because it also suggested that knowing does not only come from the examination of an experience but also from the participation in the action itself. This form of knowing was what Schön referred to as knowing-in-action (Schön 1983) or Polanyi's (1966) tacit knowledge.

However, it is important to note that this research was about dialogic reflection. The dialectical aspect of dialogic reflection was also of interest and hence also had an influence on the paradigm of the research. Dialogic reflection suggested that knowledge was not only achieved from a solitary interaction with the world and that knowing could be a social activity (Glazer et al. 2004; Tigelaar et al. 2008). In addition, the dialogic reflection featured two ways of knowing: learning resulting from the dialogic examination of an experience, and learning from the act of participating in the dialogue (Tigelaar et al. 2008). Therefore, the epistemology of dialogic reflection was more than knowing from looking back on the experience and also included knowing elicited from the act of conversing in a reflective manner; the epistemic nature hinted

at the participatory paradigm where researchers create an understanding of the human condition through the embodiment of the experience (Heron 1971), in this case, the experience of reflecting dialogically.

4.1.2. Ontology

Knowing through experience and action suggested that reality is found in the participation in the world. Heron and Reason (1997) argued that it is not possible to give an absolute description of reality. In fact, according to them, it is not even possible to have absolute experiential knowing because one interacts with the world from one's perception. Hence the understanding of reality is conditional on the experiences of the individual, and the reality of those experiences is conditional on prior experiences (Heron and Reason 1997). This was distinct from constructivism as an ontological concept where reality is a mental construction based on tangible entities rather than the perception of these entities as informed by prior experiences (Heron 1996; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Mehay and Waters 2010).

In reflection, reality is understood through experiencing something and understanding that experience, however, this process of understanding is dependent on what the individual understands from his or her prior experiences. This is most clearly understood from the cyclical models of reflection where learning is utilised in experiences that follow them (Gibbs 1988). The new experience is then experienced and examined based on what the individual knew previously. Reflection is where new knowledge results in new experiences and these experiences then allow the development of new knowledge (Wong et al. 2016). Hence the reality is perceptual and absolute experiential knowing is not possible (Heron and Reason 1997).

The concrete reality for many social scientists is a list of particular facts that they would like to capture; for example, the presence or absence of water, problems concerning erosion in the area. For me, the concrete reality is something more than isolated facts. In my view, thinking dialectically, the concrete reality consists not only of concrete facts and (physical) things, but also includes the ways in which the people involved with these

facts perceive them. Thus in the last analysis, for me, the concrete reality is the connection between subjectivity and objectivity, never objectivity isolated from subjectivity. (Freire 1982, p. 30)

Similar to relativism (Lincoln and Guba 2000), reality can be known through a solitary process of knowing as in monologic reflection or collectively as in dialogic reflection. Therefore, an enquiry in dialogic reflection required participation in dialogue in order to create any form of knowing.

In the participatory paradigm,

Reality is the fruit of an interaction of the given cosmos and the way the mind engages with it (Heron and Reason 1997, p. 277)

Things become what our consciousness makes of them through the active participation of our mind (Skolimowski 1994, pp. 27–28)

Heron and Reason (1997) argued that the interaction between the individual and his or her mind with the universe is the process of understanding reality and thus because of this, reality is not absolute. Skolimowski (1994, p. 100) argued that the world “is an epistemological construct, a form of our understanding”, a product of our interaction with the universe. Thus, the ontology of dialogic reflection lies in the objective-subjective, the dialectic between the occupational therapy students and I as dialogic reflectors and the experiences that we found ourselves in. It was our understanding of the world that granted us the state of being and therefore, the ability to know.

4.1.3. Axiology

Axiology is the question of the value of the enquiry paradigm (Heron and Reason 1997). It requires the researcher to question what is intrinsically worthwhile and valuable to the research (Heron and Reason 1997; Chilisa and Kawulich 2012). Heron and Reason (1997) argued that paradigms, as a representation of the beliefs of the discipline (Kuhn 1996), should also represent what was inherently valuable or it legitimised all means to the pursuit of truth, scrupulous or

not. Hence the consideration of axiology is also the part of the ethical consideration of this research.

Apart from valuing human experiences, and knowledge from it as the word 'reflection' would suggest, this research also valued participation in dialogue. Gaining knowledge and understanding from experience can be a social activity as dialogic reflection indicated (Glazer et al. 2004; Tigelaar et al. 2008). In keeping with this principle, the understanding of dialogic reflection and ways of doing it should also be a social experience. This research question should be answered while immersed in the experience and knowledge about the topic and its related disciplines; the theory should be crafted in the synthesis of these experiences and knowledge generated in the dialogue. In other words, this research should be approached dialogically and therefore, participation in this dialogue should be a core value in this research.

The participatory paradigm answers the axiological question in terms of human flourishing, conceived as an end in itself where such flourishing is construed as an enabling balance within and between people of hierarchy, co-operation and autonomy. (Heron and Reason 1997, p. 280)

A feature of the participatory paradigm is the importance of collaboration in the enquiry. Collaboration grounds individuals in the research within the community, providing each other with support and feedback through the offering of different perspectives (Randall and Southgate 1980). In the participatory paradigm, this collaborative approach occurs through the hierarchical relationship present in the research, where those with greater skill and experience providing guidance (Torbert 1991). However, this is also emancipatory and democratic, allowing for the expression of creativity and actualisation of those involved in the enquiry (Heron 1992). Nonetheless, inherent in this paradigm are the echoes of constructivism as the approach to enquiry is value-laden and knowledge generated is subjective and mind-dependent (Chilisa and Kawulich 2012).

With the consideration of the epistemology, ontology, and axiology of the topic of dialogic reflection, it was clear that the participatory paradigm is the most suitable research approach for this study, as chosen not by me but by the values and nature of the topic. Because of the relationship between reflection and constructivism, the research also had hints of the constructivist approach. My part in the *selection* of this paradigm was my decision to appreciate and respect the nature of dialogic reflection and to allow it to guide me to a better understanding of it. It was my opinion that this was the best way to arriving at an understanding that is closest to its true nature.

The participatory paradigm of the research was perhaps the biggest influence on the research method chosen, even more so than the methodology. This was largely because of how I had understood the purpose of enquiry in general, my thoughts on who I was as a researcher and what this research meant. By accepting my preconceptions on the topic of dialogic reflection, I designed a research project that appreciated these preconceptions from the students and me, but at the same time challenged them repeatedly.

4.2. Methodologies in This Research

The methodologies in the participatory paradigm should revolve around the democratic participation of all involved in the enquiry (Heron and Reason 1997). Therefore, in such a dialogic method of enquiry, participants are co-researchers and at the same time co-participants (Heron 1996). Knowledge is generated from the collaborative examination of themselves and their experience. Hence it indicated that in this research about dialogic reflection, the research question was answered through experiencing, studying, and reflecting on dialogic reflection. Learning about reflection is best done through experiencing it (Russell 2005; Wong et al. 2016), and the same should be applied to dialogic reflection.

Reason (1994) cited three main approaches to enquiry in the participatory paradigm: Co-operative Inquiry, Participatory Action Research and Action Inquiry. Co-operative Inquiry and

Action Inquiry stood out more than Participatory Action Research due to being strongly grounded in theory, practice, and their emphasis on different aspects of Participatory Inquiry. Participatory Action Research is about emancipating oppressed populations by developing knowledge for them, with them (Reason 1994). As this was not in line with the research question I sought to answer, I had not considered Participatory Action Research as a suitable methodology.

This research started with the Co-operative Inquiry methodology. However, as it developed, the methodology shifted towards an Action Inquiry and then towards something that was less structured and more dynamic. As co-researchers in a research in the participatory paradigm, we were part of the development of the research itself. As a result, the shifting methodologies of this research was heavily influenced by us who had co-operatively made decisions on how to best answer the research question and what was worth further exploration (Heron and Reason 2001). More details on the developing methodology of this research will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.2.1. Co-operative Inquiry

Co-operative Inquiry is the embodiment of Heron's (1971) critique of traditional social science enquiry methods where subjects are removed from the thinking and decision process. In his opinion, they are treated as less than self-determining people and the exclusion of them in the enquiry also consequently alienates them from the knowledge generated. Therefore, inappropriate to be considered as the science of the people.

In Co-operative Inquiry, Heron and Reason (1997) proposed the following extended epistemology:



Figure 1. The extended epistemology (Heron 1996)

With reference to the figure above, propositional knowing is knowing through theories and ideas concerning the topic. In Co-operative Inquiry, co-researchers of the research define the questions that need to be explored and how they can do that. This method is then applied in practice and practical knowing - knowing how to do something - manifests in the form of skill and competence, where the group decides on how they would like to go about confirming their propositional knowledge. Carrying out what the participants have planned leads to new experiences which are experiential knowing. Participants then try to make sense of the experience and arrive at presentational knowing, which then feeds into the propositional understanding of the initial inquiry (Heron and Reason 1997; 2001). Co-researchers cycle through these four forms of knowing multiple times to enhance the coherence and congruity of their understanding (Heron and Reason 1997).

The two key principles of Co-operative Inquiry are epistemic participation and political participation. The former means that any knowledge that emerges from the research is grounded in the researcher's experience, and the latter means that all those involved in the research have a part in the designing of the research as the information gathered is about themselves (Heron and Reason 1997). From the first principle, the researcher is also the subject of the research and from the second principle, the subjects are also the researchers.

The research is done by people with each other, not by researchers on other people or about them. (Heron and Reason 1997, p. 282)

Qualitative research about people is a half-way house between exclusive, controlling, quantitative positivist research on people and fully participatory, co-operative research with people. (Heron and Reason 1997, p. 283)

Williamson et al. (2012) insisted that the Co-operative Inquiry methodology fits in neither the qualitative nor the quantitative research tradition because it is about researching with rather than researching on participants (Heron and Reason 1997). The more fully the co-researchers participate in the enquiry, the more co-operative it is. This is in line with the paradigm in which dialogic reflection finds itself - the methodology of this enquiry to understand dialogic reflection should be should be collaborative and dialogic. This also meant that I was a participant in the research as much as I was a researcher, and the participants I recruited for the study were in equal parts researchers. My co-researchers and I were active agents in the research where we were all involved in the designing and management of the enquiry, experiencing and drawing conclusions from it (Heron and Reason 2001).

However, as with any human group, enquiry groups often have problems with inclusion, influence and intimacy. Co-researchers will take different roles in the dialogue and the contribution, in terms of quality and quantity will differ. Reason (1994) suggested that the member(s) that initiated the enquiry may act as the facilitator(s) of the process and how the group negotiates the power differentials will affect the quality of work produced. Even though unanimity is ideal, it is rarely feasible (Reason 1994). At the very least, all the co-researches should be given the opportunity to participate in every part of the enquiry process and be allowed to freely voice their thoughts about the process and the outcome.

4.2.2. Action Inquiry

Action Inquiry was a transitional methodology as the research developed from a Co-operative Inquiry to something less structured. Action Inquiry is based on the key thought that “knowledge

is always gained in action and for action” (Torbert 1981, p. 145). Central to Action Inquiry is that the theories that are used to guide action, if identified, can be used to predict behaviours. The focal point of this methodology is in the actions taken. Espoused theories, which are those that one claims to follow, can be incongruent to the theories actually evident in one’s action – theories-in-use (Argyris et al. 1985). This difference may not be a conscious decision.

Action Inquiry can be conducted in the first, second or third person types of research (Torbert 2001). First person Action Inquiry is about being mindful of one’s actions in life and identifying possible differences between what one believes in and how one behaves (Torbert 2001). In second person Action Inquiry, a group of researchers engage in this exploration together through collaborative enquiry and mutual influence (Torbert 2001). Third person Action Inquiry occurs at the organisational level, providing the right environment for first and second person Action Inquiry to occur in the organisation (Torbert 2001). Action Inquiry was a suitable methodological approach to this research because of its appreciation of the importance of reflection in the research process. The first person Action Inquiry is fundamentally a monological reflective process, while the second person Action Inquiry describes a form of research that features reflection amongst a group of researchers, essentially describing a dialogic reflection. Third person Action Inquiry thus describes an organisation that encourages reflection and dialogic reflection, such as a university. These three forms of Action Inquiry were in line with my intention to understanding dialogic reflection and its place in the curriculum.

Co-operation and reflection were the crux of the methodological consideration for this research. The two themes were well represented in Co-operative Inquiry and Action Inquiry. Co-operative Inquiry was chosen over Action Inquiry at the start because principles of political participation and epistemic participation echoed the epistemological, ontological, and axiological considerations described earlier in this chapter. Over the course of research however, it appeared that my co-researchers and I moved away from a research that would be considered

as a Co-operative Inquiry towards one that resembled an Action Inquiry. It was not a conscious decision to switch the methodology. This change was brought about by the change in the discourse generated as the research developed and a change in the way my co-researchers and I had decided to approach the topic of dialogic reflection. This will be further explained in the next chapter.

4.3. The Purpose of Enquiry

The exploration of the paradigm and methodology of the research has led me to reflect on the purpose of this enquiry. The participatory paradigm takes the following philosophical positions,

1. Reality is what our consciousness makes sense of through the processes of one's mind
2. Knowledge can be found in one's experience of the world
3. There is value in experience and participation in the enquiry about the world

These statements indicate an appreciation of the subjective-objective perspective of reality, knowledge, and truth. This, however, contradicted Myrdal's (1970) stance on social research,

The ethos of social science is the search for "objective" truth. The faith of the student is his conviction that truth is wholesome and that illusions are damaging, especially opportunistic ones. He seeks "realism," a term which in one of its meanings denotes an "objective" view of reality. (Myrdal 1970, p. 3)

Myrdal (1970) believed researchers should liberate themselves from the influences from his or her own personality that is moulded by the individual's background.

This research on dialogic reflection, being in the participatory paradigm, was not about the search for an objective truth, but a subjective version of it. Hence in this vein, this research should not have expected my co-researchers or me to cast aside our individual "history, constitution, and inclinations" (Myrdal 1970, p. 4) for it would have rendered the experience a mere itinerary of actions we had taken in this research. Rather, all of us should make explicit our

backgrounds, prior preconceptions and knowledge and experiences and explore how they influence, contradict, and change each other through the enquiry. For dialogue to be democratic, the research should take prior experiences of all the co-researchers as relevant and they should be open minded to each other's opinion and preconceptions of the topic (Gustavsen 2001).

Plato pointed out an interesting paradox of enquiry in his work, Meno.

Man cannot enquire either about that which he knows, or about that which he does not know; for if he knows, he has no need to enquire; and if not, he cannot; for he does not know the very subject about which he is to enquire (Plato 402 BC, 80e)

Enquiry is paradoxical in the sense that the thought that a problem exists presupposes some knowledge of the solution to it hence a method to solve the problem which is the enquiry process. Therefore, the problem does not exist in the first place since there is a method to a solution. Plato attributed this prior knowledge of a solution to the innate knowledge of the soul (Jowett 1949) while Polanyi (1966) presented a different answer to this paradox: tacit knowledge. He argued that

Meno shows conclusively that if all knowledge is explicit, i.e. capable of being clearly stated, then we cannot know a problem or look for its solution. And the Meno also shows, therefore, that if problems nevertheless exist, and discoveries can be made by solving them, we can know things, and important things, that we cannot tell. (Polanyi 1966, p. 22)

Polanyi (1966) argued that enquiry is ultimately driven by the tacit knowledge that is so implicit that the researcher regards it as a discovery rather than uncovering what is already known but not explicit to the researcher. Hence, this suggested that this enquiry into dialogic reflection was a process of making explicit this tacit knowledge possessed by all the co-researchers and me. As tacit knowledge is built on experience, all the co-researchers of this research, at some point in their lives prior to the research have experienced and already generated some tacit knowledge

about dialogic reflection. Hence this research method should be reflective so as to elicit this tacit knowledge.

The presence of preconceptions in the enquiry is appreciated widely even beyond social sciences, in fact, many would argue that preconceptions are the initial drive for scientific enquiry. Oppenheimer (1958) argued that scientific enquiry is the correction of preconception

Science starts with preconception, with the common culture, and with common sense. It moves on to observation, is marked by the discovery of paradox, and is then concerned with the correction of preconception. (Oppenheimer 1958, p. 67)

Preconceptions have an important place because of its role in the formulation a hypothesis (Ayala 2009). Popper (1987) furthered this argument by noting that objectivity is impossible for human beings.

Therefore, for this research, preconceptions, prior experiences and knowledge, explicit or implicit, were not anathema to the theory generation like Myrdal (1970) suggested. In fact, in consideration of the participatory paradigm, it should be embraced because it only adds to the richness of the theory generated. The methodology of this research should, therefore, allow these preconceptions to be shared and challenged and tacit knowledge to be made explicit. In other words, this research should encourage my co-researchers and me to be open and reflective. It was important that while I was a researcher, I was also a participant in this research and thus I had to be mindful of my own participation. In addition, I also had to share my own preconceptions, prior experiences, and knowledge with my other co-researchers to collaboratively develop our understanding of dialogic reflection.

4.4. Conclusion

This research was conducted to understand the suitability of dialogic reflection for occupational therapy students in their professional development. After considering the epistemology,

ontology and axiology of dialogic reflection, the participatory paradigm appeared to most suitable for this research. In appreciation of the nature of the participatory paradigm and my position in this research, it became apparent that the initial objectives as stated at the start of this chapter required some rewording, particularly the first objective. The objectives of the research should reflect the fact that, I was part of the process of experiencing dialogic reflection and creating an understanding about it, along with the occupational therapy students involved. The research question remained the same as before:

How suitable is collaborative (or dialogic) reflection for occupational therapy students in their professional development?

The objectives of the study were reworded as:

1. To understand the experience of engaging in collaborative (or dialogic) reflection from *my perspective and that of student occupational therapists*.
2. To explore the potential of its use in occupational therapy education for professional development.
3. To attempt to develop a model for the use of collaborative (or dialogic) reflection in occupational therapy education.

When conducting this research, I was acutely aware that while I was a researcher, I was also a participant. Shifting between these roles were at times a difficulty and this is elaborated upon in the later chapters as part of the findings of this research. Nonetheless, as the participatory paradigm and the purpose of this enquiry suggested, it was inherently crucial that I was a participant in this research, as much as I was a researcher. Conversely, the occupational therapy students in this research were also treated as co-researchers, as well as participants. The dual roles that all of us had played was a key argument in situating this research in the participatory paradigm.

As my co-researchers also had a say in how we went about researching dialogic reflection, the methodology shifted as they research progressed. Even though we had started off with a Co-operative Inquiry, the methodology quickly became more like an Action Inquiry. This was not a conscious decision because it was a result of responding to the progress of the research and deciding on what we all felt important and worth further discussion. This is further elaborated in the next chapter about the research process.

Chapter 5. Conducting the Research

I started this research by first reading up on the topic of dialogic reflection, initially to formulate a theory about dialogic reflection based on available literature around this topic. However, instead of formulating a theory, I became more perplexed by dialogic reflection and how it worked. My initial confusion about dialogic reflection was then further explored through deep reflective discussions with fourteen students from the Post-Graduate Diploma (PGDip) Occupational Therapy course.

When I first started with the literature review, I wanted to conduct a structured search for the literature hence I used a method called Critical Interpretive Synthesis (Dixon-Woods et al. 2006). Even though I had first thought this method would be suitable for my literature review, I quickly realised that this was not so for various reasons relating to the nature of the topic of this research. Thus, I changed my literature search method to something that was more reflective in nature, which I saw as a better fit for this research. The literature review method can be found in Appendix A.

Action research was the data collection method for this research. Prior to collecting data, I had spent some time observing the way lecturers facilitated PBL groups with the PGDip occupational therapy students. I eventually recruited fourteen students to participate in my research as co-researchers.

I set up two research groups made up of seven students and me in each group and these two groups ran concurrently. Over a span of one year and one month, there were a total of fifteen sessions – seven sessions per group and a concluding session. Each session lasted between one hour to one and a half hours. After each session, I transcribed the recordings and thematically analysed the transcripts before sending the coded transcripts to the other co-researchers prior

to the next session. These analyses became topics for further discussions in the next session. These discussions also allowed the research groups to co-operatively analyse their discussions from the previous sessions.

Even though we had started this research with Co-operative Inquiry as the methodology, in both groups, I saw that it transitioned into an Action Inquiry mid-way through the research. This then later eventually became discussion sessions that were deeply reflective and less structured, moving away from Action Inquiry and towards a dialogic reflection.

This chapter documents the research process as it happened, the successes we had and the challenges that we faced.

5.1. Action Research

I conducted the Co-operative Inquiry using action research as the method of choice.

Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason and Bradbury 2001a, p. 1)

Action research embraces the idea that knowledge is socially constructed and recognises that all research is conducted within a system of values and encourages some form of human interaction. This is the antithesis to the positivistic stance that the rigour and quality of knowledge generation can only be demonstrated by research that is objective, empirical and value-free (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003).

There is no single right way of conducting an action research study and the diversity of action research allows for a myriad of methods in which it can be used in inquiry (Reason and Bradbury

2001b). Nonetheless, first, second and third person research, as discussed in the previous chapter, are three broad ways of conducting an action research (Reason and Torbert 2001; Torbert 2001).

The most rigorous of action research engages all three forms and this was something I had strived to achieve. My personal reflections as a researcher, learner, participant and as a human is an important part of this research, and so are my co-researchers' reflections. We explored dialogic reflection as a topic of mutual interest and concern on how it is part of our everyday lives as professionals and as any other social roles we play. This research is then shared with the wider community, through publications and the writing of this thesis, not only to convey our contribution to new knowledge but also to encourage the use of dialogic reflections in education and our everyday lives. The primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that can be used in everyday lives while the wider purpose is to share this knowledge with the wider community to improve the well-being of others or what Reason and Bradbury (2001a) referred to as human flourishing.

Action research, as a form of Co-operative Inquiry, was initially used as the method for data gathering. It is more than about achieving change and the generation of new knowledge (Williamson et al. 2012); it is research in action, bringing together co-researchers who share the similar curiosity for the same concept (Coghlan and Brannick 2010). I sought to find co-researchers who were similarly interested in understanding dialogic reflection. However, I was also aware of the difficulty of the organising of an action research with occupational therapy students who would potentially be going on placements and would treat their commitments to their course-related work as a priority.

When I considered researching this topic with occupational therapy students, I was concerned about having to fit the research meetings around their curriculum. Hence, it was more feasible if the co-researchers were from the same course and cohort. I was aware that students on the

undergraduate course would have rather long summer, Easter and Christmas breaks which would encourage students to return home. This would have been a logistical strain as it also meant that the research meetings would have been sparse and irregular. Hence a post-graduate cohort was ideal since they do not have long breaks in the accelerated two-year curriculum.

I used a purposive sample of the first year post-graduate pre-qualification occupational therapy accelerated diploma course cohort as the students would have completed two placement stints, where they would have developed their own understanding of reflective practice before the research started. During the research, the students were in the university for their modules for nine months before leaving again for a three-month long placement. The nine months when the cohort was in the university was the perfect window for me to fit the research in their curriculum. Additionally, the three-month period where they were on placement was a good breather for the students to assimilate what they had theorised about dialogic reflection and apply it in their practice. Upon returning to the university for a few weeks, they were soon off for their elective module where they were away from the university. Fortunately, I was able to conduct a final concluding session before they left for their elective modules. After returning from their elective module, the students completed their PGDip course.

I had previously worked very closely with the programme manager of the PGDip course who had a great interest in reflective practice. She was aware of the research that I had intended to conduct and was very supportive of me getting in contact with her students for the research. In addition, she was happy for me to sit in on some of their PBL sessions to observe how the lecturers had facilitated the PBL groups.

5.1.1. Observing the PBL Sessions

My initial contact with the PGDip occupational therapy students was when I observed the facilitation of their PBL sessions. At that point, I was aware that I will potentially be facilitating dialogic reflections in the action research hence, I was interested in learning how lecturers

managed these group dialogues, particularly the way they asked questions to trigger deeper and wider thinking.

At these PBL sessions, I purposely made myself as inconspicuous as possible, sitting in the corner away from the group. I wanted to be an observer in these sessions as I was very mindful of my aim which was to observe the natural interactions between the students and lecturer. However, this intent was met with deep curiosity from the students.

The students were interested in this stranger who was observing their sessions and quite openly questioned me on my purpose for being in their sessions. After some introduction, they became quite interested in my topic of research and discussed their frustrations about reflection rather openly. They seemed quite comfortable with my presence in their groups and it was interesting that they had not treated me as an outsider; rather, they treated me as an insider from outside their cohort. This was perhaps because of the way I had introduced myself to them; I had described myself as an ex-occupational therapy student. Unconsciously, in doing that, I had come across more as a senior student than a researcher who was there to *study* their PBL sessions. As much as I initially wanted to be an observer, I was quite warmly welcomed by the cohort as a senior student and an acquaintance.

5.1.2. Getting Them Interested in the Research

After receiving ethical approval from the university, an email attached with a cover letter (Appendix B), information sheet (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix D) was later sent out to the entire cohort occupational therapy student through the programme manager. With her help, I had also placed an announcement on their curriculum information portal to inform them of my recruitment and an information session about the research which I was hosting. All students of the cohort were invited to hear more about the research and to ask any question about the research.

There were twenty-one students in the targeted PGDip cohort. I had considered that I needed a minimum of five students for one research group and a maximum of fourteen students for two research groups as Harrison-Paul and Coley's (2015) research had suggested. The research conducted by Harrison-Paul and Coley (2015) explored forming interdisciplinary reflective practice groups. They had formed groups of eight to twelve practitioners however a concluding survey they had conducted at the end suggested that smaller groups of five to seven would be ideal (Harrison-Paul and Coley 2015). As the research groups would be running concurrently, it would not have been practical to have more than two groups. I had arranged for the information session to be held after their lecture and before lunch to make it as convenient as possible for them. Sixteen students attended my information session.

During the information session, students started getting very excited about talking about reflection. This was mostly fuelled by their displeasure about having to write their reflections for their educators on the placement that they had just recently done. At this point, the information session developed into a discussion about reflection which I ended by telling them to "hold that thought" and to revisit the ideas when the research commenced.

All sixteen students expressed their interest in the study and signed the consent form at the end of the information session, however, fourteen students participated as co-researchers while two students had pulled out from the research before it began. At the information session, these students had requested to be randomly selected as they were familiar with each other and comfortable with reflecting in the presence of each other. Two groups of eight co-researchers were formed (seven students plus me in each group). Appendix E shows some additional demographic information about these co-researchers. Not all the co-researchers were able to attend all meetings; while most meetings had full attendance, there was one meeting with only five co-researchers present including myself but we decided to carry on with the meeting as it was still within the recommended group size as Harrison-Paul and Coley (2015) had suggested.

It was relieving not only because I managed to recruit co-researchers for my action research, but also because I found people that were interested in understanding dialogic reflection. From my experience, talking about reflection was often met with disdain because it reminded some people of having to talk about their feelings and thoughts almost in a psychotherapeutic way. In some cases, reflection was referred to demeaningly as “navel-gazing” (Finlay 2002, p. 215) or “the R-word” (Russell 2005, p. 202). While the discussion during the information session with the students was fuelled by frustration and disenchantment, the fact that the students were interested in the research showed a desire for change and improvement in the use of reflection in the curriculum.

The research commenced two months later after the students had returned from their placement. The two research groups met seven times each over nine months. Each session lasted between an hour to one and a half hour and was audio recorded. I transcribed and analysed the recordings of each session before sending them back to the other co-researchers for member-checking. This was done for triangulation purposes, ensuring that the transcripts were credible and accurate hence contributing to the trustworthiness of this research (Lincoln and Guba 1985). These analyses then formed the discussion points for the next session and co-researchers were invited to challenge and debate over the analysis. The cohort then left for their three-month placement stint. When they returned, both research groups then convened for a concluding session.

5.2. Conducting the Research

The figure below illustrates the basic structure of the action research cycle which this research was based upon.

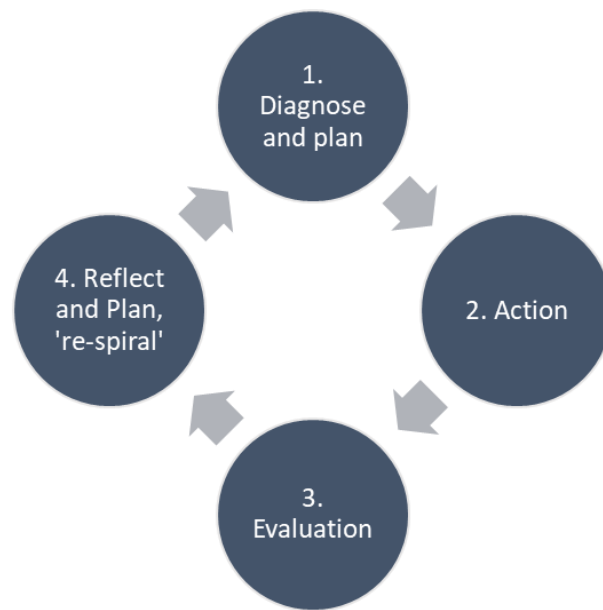


Figure 2. Action research spiral framework (Lewin 1946)

With reference to the above figure,

1. The planning stage was where the co-researchers and I explored dialogic reflection relating to our understanding of it at that point and our prior experience. Knowledge of the subject was deconstructed at this point to examine areas that require further exploration. A plan was the collectively generated to further understand areas of interest within the theory (Reason and Bradbury 2006).
2. The groups chose to develop our understanding through the participation in dialogic reflective sessions and discussions about the topic. The absence of a hard and fast rule to action research offered a large amount of flexibility in this action phase (Williamson et al. 2012).
3. The dialogic reflection was then evaluated collectively, problems and opportunities that arose during the action stage were highlighted and examined (Reason and Bradbury 2006)

4. The reflective phase enabled my co-researchers and I to analyse and question our initial assumptions of the dialogic reflection (Reason and Bradbury 2006; Williamson et al. 2012). Prior knowledge was reconstructed by the group, informed by our experience. The groups then returned to stage one with a new understanding of dialogic reflection, this time exploring a different aspect of the same subject or taking a different approach to developing our knowledge. This phase added to the trustworthiness of the action research as the co-researchers analyse their own participation in the research hence making the analyses a more accurate reflection of their own experiences. This phase also compels my co-researchers and I to acknowledge and challenge our own positions in the research hence contributing to a high degree of reflexivity.

These phases guided the research and the amount of time dedicated to each phase was dependent on the groups' decision. In the first four sessions of each group, dialogic reflective sessions were carried out at the end of every meeting and these were evaluated and reflected upon at the start of the next meeting. Very quickly, a theory about dialogic reflection was developed and in the remainder three sessions, more time was dedicated to understanding the value of it and ways of implementing it in curriculum. The groups felt that discussions and reflections on our prior experiences of dialogic reflections were the best way to develop our knowledge in these areas. At the last sessions of the research, the groups returned to the initial theory and restructured it as we understood the value of dialogic reflection better and practicality of implementing it in the curriculum.

As the initiator of this research, I took the responsibility of arranging the meetings, booked the venue, and provided light refreshments. The meetings were all audio recorded on two dictaphones for back up and cross checking of transcripts. My own reflective logs which I had written after the sessions were also used as data to inform not only the analysis but also the methodology of the research. I acknowledge my thoughts and feelings about the research as it

progressed, and these reflective logs were shared with my supervisors who I also reflect regularly with. By reflecting explicitly with others, I could keep track of how my thoughts had morphed throughout the research and how they had influenced this research, contributing to the reflexivity in this study. Private forums were set up for each group prior to the research however they were not used by the co-researchers, except for the organisation of the first session. Nonetheless, the forums were left available for the co-researchers as an option for communication, before, during and after the research. My co-researchers had preferred to use their emails for communications. They were also invited to submit any reflective logs as data on their own volition, however, none was submitted. This was done with the intention of adding to the trustworthiness of the research. Even though I did not receive any reflections from my co-researchers this was also left as an avenue for communication throughout the research.

Fourteen group sessions and one combined concluding session were conducted. Each session lasted between an hour and an hour and forty-five minutes. The entire data gathering period spanned over a year and one month.

5.2.1. Overview of Research Process

In general, each group met separately to discuss dialogic reflection and to reflect dialogically on specific topics. After each session, I transcribed the audio recordings, conducted some preliminary analysis and then sent it back to the respective group members to member check. The preliminary analyses were analyses that were developed from the process of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). After transcribing the recordings, I coded the transcripts for emerging ideas. These ideas from both groups were then iteratively mapped into thematic maps after every 3 sessions. Please refer to Appendix F for thematic map for session 1, Appendix G for thematic map for session 4, Appendix H for thematic map for session 7 and Appendix I for the final thematic map. In the next session, we discussed these preliminary analyses and group members had the opportunity to offer their own analysis of the previous session. This led to

more topics of interest generated which were recorded, transcribed and analysed, ready for the next session for further discussion.

Even though each research group ran simultaneously, the discussion topics were largely similar mostly since new ideas that emerged from one group were brought to the other group for further discussion as well. My co-researchers were happy for me to do so and anonymity was maintained. This was done for investigator triangulation purposes (Guion 2002), to check that co-researchers from another group agreed with the analysis. The following table summarises the main topics of discussions in both research groups and shows the changes in the development of methodology throughout the research. It also shows how the research groups have cycled through the four forms of knowing as discussed in the previous chapter.

Session	Topics of discussion	Methodology				
1	Dialogic reflective partners	Propositional knowledge	Co-operative Inquiry			
	Potential of reflection					
	Challenges of reflection and dialogic reflection					
	True reflection					
	Reflection as a natural instinct					
	Expressing reflection					
	How to conduct a dialogic reflection	Practical knowledge				
2	Dialogic reflection on dealing with difficult educators	Experiential knowledge				
	Different Forms of dialogic reflection	Presentational knowledge				
	Structure of a dialogic reflection					
	Dialogic reflection on placement					
	Dialogic reflection as a social activity					
	False reflections					
	Models of reflection					
	Assessing reflection					
	Students expecting to be professionals					
	Reflector role in PBL					
	3			Dialogic reflection as natural interaction		
				Reflection as innate ability		
Multiple perspectives		Propositional knowledge				
Reflection and morality						
Dialogic reflection on dealing with ethical issues		Practical and Experiential knowledge				
4	World making and group world making	Presentational knowledge				
	Facilitation of dialogic reflection					
	Trust and vulnerability					
	Purpose of reflection					
	Meaningful reflections					
5	Structuring dialogic reflection	Enquiry	Action Inquiry			
	Facilitator					
	Incorporating dialogic reflection into the curriculum	Action				
	Dialogic reflection on professional development					
6	Conditions for successful dialogic reflection	Dialogic reflection				
	Making PBL reflections dialogic					
	Role of facilitator					
	Limitations of dialogic reflection					
7	Incorporating dialogic reflection into the curriculum					
	Reflective partners					
	Being a student and becoming a professional					
	Professional development					
	Extrospection and Introspection					
Concluding session	Dialogic reflection as an epistemology					
	How to extrospect					
	How to introspect					
	Mindful practice					

Table 2. Overview of action research

Both groups started the research by first setting some group rules which was encouraged by Heron (1999). With reference to Table 2, session one was dedicated to establishing what we already knew about reflection and dialogic reflection. Both groups started with our fundamental understanding of reflection and dialogic reflection. This was also where I had shared what I knew about dialogic reflection from my own literature review. I observed that this session predominantly featured propositional knowledge as we shared our own understanding on the theories and ideas about dialogic reflection. Towards the end of session one, we transitioned to developing practical knowledge by discussing how we should conduct dialogic reflection.

In session two, both groups started a dialogic reflection around the topic of dealing with difficult educators. In this session, the groups were engaging in generating experiential knowledge, knowledge that is featured in the act of engaging in an activity together. The groups then engaged a discussion about their experience of dialogic reflection in that session, trying to make sense of it. The groups at this point were generating presentational knowledge. The groups also revisited propositional knowledge that was discussed in session one to further build and modify our initial understanding of dialogic reflection.

In session three, the groups continued with some discussions about the presentational knowledge as established in session two and propositional knowledge in session one. Dialogic reflection as an instinct and natural interaction was of great interest to both research groups thus far. This discussion then led both groups to the idea of values and morality and how they play a part in dialogic reflection. This became something that the groups were interested in exploring further (propositional knowledge). At this point the groups also returned to our practical knowledge about how to dialogically reflect and did not find any issue with how we had dialogically reflected in session two. We thus affirmed our understanding on how to conduct dialogic reflection. We then reflected dialogically on ethical issues they have experienced

(experiential knowledge) as we wanted to expand our propositional knowledge on dialogic reflections and morality.

In session four, both groups started to conceptualise their experiences of dialogic reflection in this research (presentational knowledge). The idea of worldmaking (Goodman 1978) was introduced to the group and adapting that philosophy, the groups then proceeded to theorise their experience and coined the process as group worldmaking. Both groups then probed at different aspects of group world making to develop this idea further. The topic of trust and vulnerability was of great interest to both groups. Both groups also revisited their propositional knowledge to discuss the purpose of reflections. Up till session four, there were rather distinct phases of propositional, presentation, practical and experiential knowledge and it was clear that the groups both kept closely to Co-operative Inquiry as a methodology.

However, these phases of knowledge cycling were less distinct in session five. The groups started moving back and forth between presentational and propositional knowing, and between experiential and practical knowing quite naturally in the discussions. However, it was clear that the groups were reflecting on their experiences of dialogic reflection previously and considering how dialogic reflection can be put into action in their curriculum. There were two distinct phases instead in this session, reflective enquiry and action. Therefore, the methodology of the research developed into Action Inquiry. This switch in methodology was unconscious and unintentional, both groups did not note this change explicitly. However, in hindsight, I attributed this change due to the change in discourse generated in the research.

In session four, the groups theorised group world making which largely answered the theoretical objective of this research: to understand the experience of engaging in dialogic reflection. To this end, research groups were satisfied with the theoretical discourse that had been generated in the research then and were focusing on the next two objectives of the research which were exploring the potential of dialogic reflection and proposing a model for its implementation in

the curriculum respectively. Exploring the second and third objectives had apparently required a change in the methodology of the research towards one which was more fluid and organic and true to the nature of dialogue, resembling an Action Inquiry. The groups were less concerned about approaching the enquiry systematically as we had done in session one to three, rather we preferred a structure which was more dialogic and natural, in other words, resembling more like a dialogic reflection according to our theory. Action Inquiry was seen as a transitional methodology as the research developed from a Co-operative Inquiry, with clear cycling of knowledge, to a dialogic reflection, which is natural and dynamic. Dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry is further discussed in the findings of this research.

In session six and seven, both groups had tried to contextualise dialogic reflection in occupational therapy to understand its potential and come up with a way to implement dialogic reflection in the curriculum. However, both groups had little success to these ends. While in session six, groups had come up with some ideas on how it could be implemented, these ideas were challenged in session seven in both groups. In session seven both groups were quite troubled because the ideas they had generated previously did not seem feasible for implementation after deeper consideration.

Since session two when both research groups conducted a dialogic reflection on dealing with difficult educators, the contextual discourse about the potential of dialogic reflection had been considered. The groups had tried to understand how engaging in dialogic reflection in this research had changed their occupational therapy practice but had found limited progress in this area. I tried to frame this discussion using professional development frameworks however the groups had pointed out that the developments they had experienced were in transferable soft skills such as communication, they had experienced little development in their own practice of reflection outside the research. These aspects of professional development appeared to be more related to personal development. From a Co-operative Inquiry to an Action Inquiry, the

research eventually ended up as a meta-dialogic reflection – the understanding of dialogic reflection through dialogue and reflection amongst the co-researchers and me.

This difficulty in exploring the potential of dialogic reflection and the ways of implementing it was caused by framing dialogic reflection in something that it was not meant to fit, i.e. education and curriculum. In the earlier sessions both groups had concluded that dialogic reflection is a natural process. Reflection is a part of life that had its place outside professional occupational therapy and in one's personal life. By contextualising dialogic reflection in occupational therapy education and exploring how it can be part of the curriculum was making it esoteric and a skill that occupational therapy students should be using. This was contradictory to what the theoretical discourse was. In some sense, this was similar to the phenomena that Fish (2012) had observed with her model of reflection as described in Chapter Seven. I realised that we were trying to force dialogic reflection into becoming a tool that can be used in the curriculum and in occupational therapy practice and in doing so, we made it reductive. The theoretical discourse that both groups had generated was that dialogic reflection is a form natural interaction with one's environment. By contextualising and implementing it in occupational therapy education, we were trying to make dialogic reflection deliberate and unnatural, hence meeting many impediments such as module design, reticence and trust issues. These will be further discussed in the findings.

I was initially feeling rather defeated after session seven as it became quite apparent that dialogic reflection was something rather tricky to implement in the curriculum, if not impossible. However, after seeing the fundamental conflict in the theoretical discourse and other research objectives we tried to achieve, I realised that we had to change the way we had perceived dialogic reflection and explored the idea of dialogic reflection as something natural and a form of organic interaction between one and one's world. When I presented this to the groups in the final concluding session, we agreed that we had indeed been limited by the research objectives

and hence found ourselves in a position where we were constantly arguing against our own suggestions in session six and seven. There was an incongruence between our beliefs about dialogic reflection and what we wanted to achieve initially through the research. Coming to terms with the dissonance in our enquiry, I had decided to delineate dialogic reflection as two forms: extrospection and introspection, one of which we had deemed possible to implement in the curriculum. We had refused to compromise on our theory of dialogic reflection by suggesting recommendations that we found contradictory to our theory. These recommendations will be discussed later in the thesis.

5.3. Analysis

In this research, analysis was two-fold: I first attempted some thematic analysis before bringing ideas to the groups for co-operative analysis in the next session. I had initially tried to thematically analyse as Braun and Clarke (2006) had recommended but realised that there were issues with getting my co-researchers to participate in developing the analyses. Instead, I saw thematic analysis as a launch pad for co-operative analysis to occur in the action research.

5.3.1. Action Research as A Self-Analysing Method

Participation in Co-operative Inquiry is as important as participation in co-operative analysis of the enquiry itself. Co-researchers enquire about a topic through experiencing and understanding that experience, hence the analysis of experience is an important component of the enquiry process (Reason and Heron 1995; Heron 1996).

According to Heron (1996), co-researchers are fully immersed in the experience and engaged with the enquiry as co-subjects. Whilst in the process of understanding their experience, co-researchers look at their experiences with a fresh mind. This shared experience is understood deeper such that their initial understanding is expanded upon or rejected. The research group may be led away from their proposed ideas and decide to explore new areas or they may lose awareness of the development of the inquiry. It is this process of understanding experience and

the developments of the enquiry that drives the development of experiential knowing (Reason and Heron 1995). The original propositions and questions are reconsidered in light of the new experience. In this consideration the co-researchers decide to change, further elaborate on them, rejected them and suggest new questions or areas of focus for the next cycle of action research. The groups may even decide to take a different form of action in the next cycle or different ways of gathering data, in response to their new experience of it and the new questions the inquiry serves to answer. Presentational knowing here bridges the action and evaluation phase (Reason and Heron 1995). Reason and Heron (1995) proposed that this analysis is the reflection aspect of the enquiry as it oscillates between action, as in the planning and action stages, and reflection, as in the evaluation and reflection stages.

Participation in actions and participation in reflections on these actions are of equal importance for an enquiry in the participatory paradigm (Heron and Reason 1997). In my research, I had to initiate the reflection on the actions before the co-researchers felt comfortable to contribute to it. Co-researchers then raised or reframed points that I had raised as topics of analysis from the action and these are then debated and developed in our discussions. I discuss co-operative analysis in more detail in the findings where describe dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry. To initiate reflection, I had to first conduct thematic analysis to elicit some points raised in the previous sessions for the groups to reflect upon. Co-operative analysis in this action research was a key contributor to the trustworthiness and reflexivity of the findings. While it is a form of investigator triangulation where my co-researchers and I confirmed and challenged the analysis, it pushed all of us to be explicit with our reflections by doing so at the sessions. We all contributed to the reflexivity of this research by evaluating our position in relation to the topic and by discussing our feelings and thoughts about the analysis.

5.3.2. Initiating the Reflection Using Thematic Analysis

To initiate a reflection, one is required to first recount the experience as illustrated in many models of reflection (Gibbs 1988; Driscoll 1994). The action phases in the research meeting were

often left to the last thirty minutes or and the next time we met was about a month later. Therefore, there was a need for me to provide a descriptive account of the ideas and action taken in the previous meeting. This required me to summarise and collate the ideas that have been discussed in the session before. This was done through the qualitative research analysis method – thematic analysis.

Action research is still developing and finding ground as a research method. While there have been many uses of action research published, there is a remarkable lack of information on how researchers had treated their data. How one goes about analysing data is not commonly dealt with even in the examples of action research that Heron and Reason (1997) had cited in their publication (Traylen 1994; Treleaven 1994; Whitmore 1994). This is perhaps since enquiry in action research is an iterative process of action and reflection. Hence in the reflection phase, research data is jointly analysed by the co-researchers. Action research, in other words, is a self-analysing method of research and there is little need for an additional step of analysis because reflection phase is part of the process.

My co-researchers who, despite having an interest in dialogic reflection, saw this research as additional to their course. I, on the other hand, saw this research as my PhD study. It was far more important to me than it was to my co-researchers who also had assignments and commitments to their course. Due to this, as the initiator of the research, I felt responsible for conducting an initial analysis of the transcript such that the ideas distilled from it became the discussion in the next session, thereby initiating the reflection phase of the research. Despite that, I was very mindful of using a method of analysis that was too constricting as the aim of this initial analysis was to provide a launch pad for co-operative analysis and not the sole definitive analysis of the action phases. Hence, I had turned to thematic analysis, the foundational method for qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Thematic analysis is a basic form of qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Thematising meanings are considered one of the generic skill that is required in all qualitative analysis (Holloway and Todres 2003). Thematic analysis is independent of epistemology and theory and hence is applicable to a wide range of qualitative analysis techniques (Braun and Clarke 2006). Due to this lack of epistemic grounding, it is arguable if this method of analysis can be considered as an approach to understanding qualitative data (Boyatzis 1998; Ryan and Bernard 2000) or if should be treated as a tool for other major analysis traditions (Braun and Clarke 2006). However, it was because of this flexibility and lack of an epistemic grounding that made thematic analysis suitable for this research.

There are many versions of thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling 2001; Joffe and Yardley 2004; Tuckett 2005; Braun and Clarke 2006). I had started with thematic analysis using the method as articulated by Braun and Clarke (2006) however I quickly ran into some difficulties with coding and over analysing the transcripts, compromising the co-operative nature of the research which also affected the trustworthiness and reflexivity.

I had coded the transcripts of the first sessions of both research groups, however, it generated a total of two hundred and sixty-four unique codes and some of these codes were questions rather than representations of the data. Whilst rereading my analysis, I was confused as some codes were too short to highlight the subtleties that were in the data and hence they were a poor representation of the data. As this analysis was meant to be read by my co-researchers, I was concerned whether they could follow my train of thoughts that led to the development of these ideas in my analysis. Additionally, I was concerned about having analysed the transcripts too much by tagging the data with representational codes such that they might appear to my co-researchers as a definitive analysis rather than a suggestion of an idea that might be worth some discussion. At this point, I felt that coding of the transcripts perhaps detrimental to the co-operative nature of this research. As there was little emergence of any pattern or trend since all

the codes were unique on their own and I was having trouble keeping track of my own train of thoughts that led to the codes, I was concerned that my co-researchers would have difficulty understanding the analysis and that they may treat my analysis as definitive rather than suggestive. This was of the greatest concern as it may limit the degree of co-operation in research. I wanted the research to stay true to the participatory paradigm. An action research where the co-researchers jointly take part in the action but not in the reflection would alter the meaning of dialogic reflection that emerged as reflected in Glazer et al.'s (2004) research. Hence, I had decided not to code the transcripts using codes, instead, I had inserted my comments next to the respective quotes which were truer to my thought process. I had left most of these comments as questions so as to encourage co-researchers to think about them or respond to them in the next session.

After analysing both sets of transcripts for each session of both groups, I wrote a reflective summary of my analysis which was a combination of my reflections on the sessions and methodological considerations and a summary of ideas raised by both groups. This reflective summary then served as an *aide-mémoire* for the next session and presented to both groups as topics to reflect upon. I was mindful to be reflexive, hence I held back my own analysis and reflections when member-checking and only brought them to the session for further discussion with my co-researchers. An example of such analysis can be found in Chapter Eight.

5.4. Analysing and Concluding the Research

Whilst doing the initial analysis of the sessions, I had iteratively mapped the themes to keep track of the development of the research according to the objectives we had set out to achieve in this action research. As the research progressed, the theory of dialogic reflection was refined and reorganised in response to the discussions. These developments will be further discussed in the next part of the thesis.

To map these themes, I had returned to phases of thematic analysis. Even though I had difficulties with the coding phase, themes had emerged from the action research nonetheless. Unlike Braun and Clarke's (2006) or Attride-Stirling's (2001) articulation, these themes did not emerge from codes, rather they manifested as discussion topics. Therefore, despite the deviation from coding phases in the thematic analysis, it was nonetheless still suitable for the research. The use of the thematic analysis remained the same as before, not to produce a definitive analysis of the data but to provide suggestions for discussion. Especially so in the concluding session at the end of the research, this thematic analysis was used to organise the themes such that I could provide a logical and coherent concept to conclude the research.

With this in mind, I had utilised the steps to thematic mapping (Braun and Clarke 2006) or thematic network analysis as Attride-Stirling (2001) had termed it. While the steps to forming the thematic maps are similar in both, Attride-Stirling's (2001) method of thematic network analysis appears more useful as an organisational method as it is based on Toulmin's (1958) argumentation theory. Argumentation theory (Toulmin 1958) is a structured method of forming arguments. Data which consists of evidence is used as support for a claim. These claims then form a central argument (Toulmin 1958). Using this organisational structure, thematic network analysis requires the analyst to build themes which are premises that are supported by data (Attride-Stirling 2001). These basic themes are then reorganised in clusters that describe the same issues and are represented by an organising theme. These organising themes are then described by a representational global theme (Attride-Stirling 2001).

However, as much as I have tried to use thematic analysis as an organisational structure there were situations where I had found myself emerging with an in-depth analysis of the transcripts. These in-depth analyses were omitted from the transcript analysis sent to the co-researchers but included in the aide-mémoire as a topic for discussion. These in-depth analyses were inevitable as themes emerging

can be misinterpreted to mean that themes 'reside' in the data, and if we look hard enough they will 'emerge' like Venus on the half shell. If themes 'reside' anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them. (Ely et al. 1997, pp. 205–206)

While I had tried to allow as much of the analysis to emerge through co-operation in the reflective phases, I had already engaged in the analysis of the action phases on my own by organising the themes and creating links through my understanding of them. In the concluding session, I presented to the co-researchers my organisation of the analysis of the research and hence, to a small extent my own analysis as well. To limit the impact of this, I had presented my analysis on the theory as discussion topics instead for the co-researchers to debate on as I had arrived at them on my own and not through co-operative analysis or reflection.

At the end of seven sessions with each group, the action research came to an end. This was because the students were about to go on a three-month long placement and would quickly be off on their elective module before they completed their course. An important logistical consideration in this research was working around the co-researchers' curriculum schedule. Therefore, it was inappropriate to organise any meetings whilst they were on placement. However, both research groups were happy to have a final concluding session together after they had returned from their placement and before they left for their elective module. I took on the responsibility of reorganising all the themes that had emerged from this research into a coherent concept in preparation for this concluding session where all the co-researchers could further debate and discuss.

5.5. Use of Pseudonyms

The use of pseudonyms in the communication of the research is a common way to ensure confidentiality (Silverman 2010). However, when writing this thesis, this was something that troubled me. I experienced a certain discomfort and reticence in sharing quotes that were very

heartfelt, reflective, and sometimes emotional. Due to this, I was initially reluctant to use pseudonyms and used “co-researcher from group one” or “co-researcher from group two” because it gave me some distance from them in my writing. Upon some reflection later, I saw the hypocrisy in my actions. If I were to argue that dialogic reflectors are individual knowers and enquirers, then I should not have treated their contributions as part of a collective, i.e. group one or group two. I should have respected their individuality. More importantly, if I were to maintain that we were reflective, then I will have to convey this in my writing. By showing our reflections, I cannot merely treat my co-researcher’s contributions as a quote from a “co-researcher from group one”. I am compelled to humanise my co-researchers by giving them pseudonyms and through sharing their reflections, convey the deep thinking and emotional exploration that had occurred. As an action researcher working within the participatory paradigm, I ought to embrace these reflections and not step away from them. This is especially crucial since my interest is in dialogic reflection. Hence, I eventually decided to use pseudonyms to share these reflections that I had captured during the research.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter documents the process of research as I had conducted it. I first started with a literature review where I initially aimed to develop an initial theory about dialogic reflection through a structured literature review method. However, after realising that did not work for this research, my literature review became guided by on own reflections on what I had read and what I did not yet know about dialogic reflection. More information about the literature method can be found in Appendix A.

I then further developed my understanding of dialogic reflection by conducting an action research with two groups of occupational therapy students. Even though we had some initial success with theorising dialogic reflection, we ran into some issues with trying to develop ways of implementing it in the curriculum. After reflecting on our earlier theory of dialogic reflection,

we had decided to stay true to our theory that we had developed and thus, we were able to move past that block.

We started the research with Co-operative Inquiry as the methodology which then transitioned to an Action Inquiry and finally a dialogic reflection. Dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry is further discussed in the findings later.

This research was co-operative in a few ways:

- I was a participant in this research as much as I was a researcher
- My co-researchers were also involved in methodological considerations of this research
- We were all involved in analysis of our own experiences and discussions in the action research, adding to the reflexivity of this research

This research was trustworthy in the following ways:

- Transcripts and analyses of the data were confirmed by my co-researchers
- My co-researchers and I analysed our own data and provided interpretations that are more accurate
- Findings in this thesis are supported by direct quotes from my co-researchers and I
- I gave pseudonyms to my co-researchers, but not myself, hence it is clear where each of our contributions to the theory lie.

However, in writing this thesis, I admit that it was unco-operative of me to not have included my co-researchers. I agree with Lincoln (1997) that true collaboration would involve all co-researchers at every stage of the research. Getting my co-researchers to write this thesis was neither practical nor appropriate. I expand on this in Appendix J. Nonetheless, I maintain that this research was as co-operative as where it was feasible, and I present the result of our collaboration in the next part of the thesis. I further expand my reflections on reflexivity of this

research in a manuscript that I am currently working on, about the need for researchers to embrace reflexivity holistically in Co-operative Inquiry.

Part Three: Dialogic Reflection as An Epistemology

This part of the thesis contains the main discussion about dialogic reflection as an epistemology. It is a synthesis of the literature about reflection and dialogue combined with the findings of the research to present the four core arguments in support of dialogic reflection as an epistemology by its own right.

Chapter Six shows an overview of the findings of this research. It also introduces the key principles of dialogic reflections, which will be further developed in the chapters to come.

Chapter Seven further elaborates, and supports with research findings, the issues relating to the confusion about reflection and its use in the academic and professional settings.

Chapter Eight argues for dialogic reflection as a way of knowing by discussing it as an approach to enquiry. It describes dialogic reflection as a collaborative enquiry into oneself through natural, yet highly analytical dialogue.

Chapter Nine features dialogic reflectors - participants of a dialogic reflection - as a community of knowers. It adds further weight to the discussion on dialogic reflection as a way of knowing by focusing on the social and dialogic aspects of it.

Chapter Ten argues that dialogic reflection is more than an intellectual analysis of experience and that it is also emotional and value-driven. In other words, dialogic reflection is an artistic way of knowing.

Chapter Eleven summarises the four lines of argument as presented in chapters four to seven and discusses dialogic reflection as an epistemology by presenting the taxonomy of dialogic reflection.

Chapter 6. Overview of Themes and Key Principles of Dialogic Reflection

The following figure shows an overview of the themes that emerged from this research:

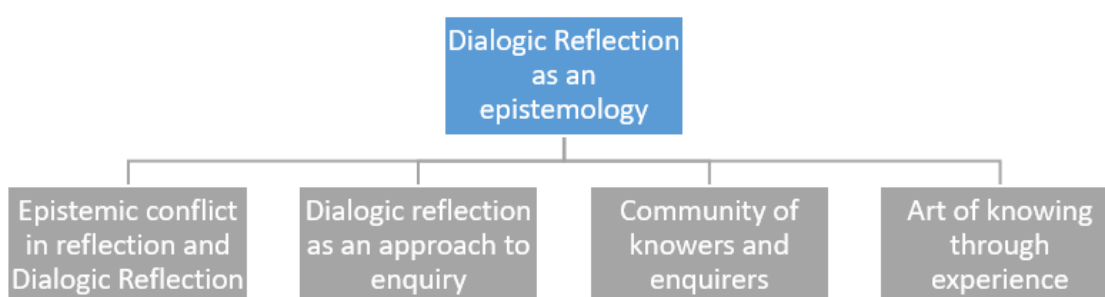


Figure 3. Overview of themes

With reference to the figure above, the overarching theme: dialogic reflection as an epistemology is supported by four major themes.

1. The confusion in the field about the concept of reflection and dialogic reflection can be due to a clash in the way they are understood at the fundamental level. In this research, I posited that we understood these concepts from different epistemological orientations, hence we found different aspects of the reflective process as more important than others. This resulted in the confusing messages about reflection as sent by educators on placements and other practitioners and theorists. Therefore, to better understand dialogic reflection, my co-researchers and I conceptualised it at the epistemic level so that we could develop a theory about it and provide

recommendations for its application that are congruent and coherent. This will be covered in Chapter Seven.

2. This research can be perceived as a meta-dialogic reflection where we developed a theory about dialogic reflection in a co-operative, dialogic and reflective manner. Hence, I argue that dialogic reflection is an approach to enquiry that is participatory, democratic and reflective. Principles of dialogic reflection will be elaborated upon later in this chapter and in Chapter Eight it is further explored as an approach to enquiry.
3. Reflectors in a dialogic reflection are independent thinkers and bring to the group a unique combination of knowledge and experiences. In a dialogic reflection, these individuals create a protective environment where they can share their knowledge and experiences honestly. Such an environment allows for in-depth analysis and this will be described in Chapter Eight. It also allows for multiple perspectives of a singular experience to be shared. This is discussed in Chapter Nine.
4. Dialogic reflection is a way of knowing from experience that is artistic. Experience is rich in emotions, intellect, values and action (Dewey 1934). Dialogic reflection embraces this aesthetic quality of experience and allows reflectors to understand the experience as whole, rather than its individual elements like some reflective models seem to encourage (Gibbs 1988). This is expanded upon in Chapter Ten.

Chapter Eleven draws all the four themes together and presents dialogic reflection as an epistemology. In this chapter, I also formally define dialogic reflection in light of our findings and delineate dialogic reflection as two distinct forms: extrospection and introspection.

6.1. Key Principles of Dialogic Reflection

There are three key principles of dialogic reflection. These key principles appear in each of the four themes presented earlier in varying degrees. Like how reflection can be understood differently from a myriad of perspectives, dialogic reflection can similarly be conceived

disparately and this is evident from Glazer et al.'s (2004) and Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) concept which we did not agree with. Therefore, it is important that these key principles of dialogic reflection are laid before the discussion in the coming chapters so as to clarify the type of dialogic reflection this research is concerned with. In arguing that dialogic reflection can be an epistemology, we also believe that dialogic reflection is an approach to enquiry as well. Like Co-operative Inquiry which is based on the principles of epistemic and democratic participation, dialogic reflection is also based on its own principles presented below.

Dialogic reflection, as an epistemology, is based on three principles: mediating theory and practice, democratic dialogue and reflection. These principles were drawn from Co-operative Inquiry, Action Inquiry and the participatory paradigm to birth a way of knowing that is grounded in experience and reflective dialogue. As this concept of dialogic reflection was part of the developing methodology as described in Chapter Five, these key principles were also transformed from the methodological considerations of this research.

6.1.1. Mediating Theory and Practice Through Values

As part of the methodological consideration, I revisited the research objectives:

1. To understand the experience of engaging in collaborative (or dialogic) reflection from my perspective and that of student occupational therapists.
2. To explore the potential of its use in occupational therapy education for professional development.
3. To attempt to develop a model for the use of collaborative (or dialogic) reflection in occupational therapy education.

I saw these objectives as three discourses. The first objective was to understand dialogic reflection and what happens in it; I called this the theoretical discourse. The second objective concerned the value of dialogic reflection in occupational therapy education. It is contextual

discourse as it essentially puts the theoretical discourse in the context of occupational therapy education and explored its importance, benefits and limitations. The third objective was the practical discourse, which explored the implementation of dialogic reflection if the contextual discourse reveals that it was valuable.

While this appeared to be a systematic approach, starting from theory, contextualisation then implementation, I had not expected it to be so. With reference to the extended epistemology (Reason and Heron 1995), my co-researchers and I cycled through the four forms of knowing during the research. The theoretical, contextual and practical discourses would have developed simultaneously through the cycling of these different forms of knowing. None of the discourses had greater priority over the others because knowledge was generated through experience and dialogue. Experiencing dialogic reflection, would not have been possible without knowing what it was or the purpose of it. Theorising dialogic reflection would not have been effective without experiencing it nor understanding the context. Naturally, understanding the value of dialogue in reflection would be dependent on how it was conducted and the theory behind it. In this research, I recognised that the second objective, the contextual discourse, is the mediator of the two other discourses.

The traditional doctrine states that knowing how to do something, incorporating dialogic reflection in the curriculum, for example, is distinct from knowing about something, the theory of dialogic reflection in this example (Ryle 1945). The construction of theory is to reflect truth or to create the most accurate interpretation of it while development of practice is to achieve success in the reality (Habermas 1973). While theory can inform practice and vice versa, the relationship is not a direct one (Habermas 1973). Gustavsen (2001) proposed that the relationship between theory and practice is a relationship between three independent discourses – a theoretical discourse, a practical discourse and a mediating discourse that links the two.

The theoretical discourse was knowledge about dialogic reflection; the practical discourse was about knowing how to do it and the contextual discourse was knowing why it should or should not be done. The contextual discourse offers the value dimension to this research and dialogic reflection by questioning the rationale behind it. Habermas (1973) argued against the notion of action research because he believed that focusing on action removes the researcher from theory development. However, I saw the contextual discourse as exactly the solution to this. In consideration of the values of the research, it allowed the fluid movement of the researchers between the theoretical discourse and the practical discourse. By constantly returning to the value of dialogic reflection, my co-researchers and I move from developing a theory about it to developing a way it could be conducted and vice versa.

Dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry is value-based and Heron and Reason (1997) had argued that it is important to consider the axiology in research. Thus, this makes objective empirical research impossible in the participatory paradigm since to consider this value question, one needs to make a judgment as the researcher. This is made more difficult in dialogic reflection since these judgements are made with the co-researchers. The connection between dialogic reflection and values will be discussed in Chapter Ten. Revealing one's values and understanding those of the other reflectors is a key process of dialogic reflection, this will be further discussed in Chapter Nine. It is through this value-based exploration that the reflector draws the connection between his or her experience and what he or she knows, bridging the theory and practice divide.

6.1.2. Democratic Dialogue

Apart from allowing the emergence of the three discourses, the methodology required by this research was one that enabled democratic dialogue and participation to take place. Participation and dialogue were important, not only because of the paradigm of the research, but also the fact that the topic of research was about dialogic reflection. And the best way to understand this

was to participate in it and to hold a dialogue about it (Schön 1987; Russell 2005; Wong et al. 2016).

Gustavsen (2001, p. 19) developed a set of democratic dialogue criteria and some are listed below,

- Dialogue is based on a principle of give and take, not one-way communication
- All concerned by the issue under discussion should have the possibility of participating
- All participants have the same status in the dialogue arenas
- Some of the experience the participant has when entering the dialogue must be seen as relevant
- All participants are obliged to accept that other participants may have arguments better than their own
- The dialogue should be able to integrate a growing degree of disagreement

These conditions that had been outlined by Gustavsen (2001) indicated to me that dialogic reflection needed to allow dynamic and mutual interaction where neither the co-researchers nor I have superiority over others. It should be as inclusive as possible for all those who are interested in the topic of research. All the researchers bring with them their own experiences and opinions and they should all be considered worth further exploration and discussion. At the same time, dialogic reflection should allow the conflict of ideas and opinions and the debate over them.

The degree of democratic dialogue is reflected in the following co-researchers' remarks about reflecting dialogically in the research,

I think, Ken you are a previous student and everything so even though we express ourselves in this manner, we feel comfortable with you because of that. [Charlotte in group two]

You are not marking us, you are not writing a reference for us so we can "you know what, I did this and it is not particularly great" without thinking of the consequences of saying it. [Alicia in group two]

These testimonies show that my co-researchers and I had achieved democratic dialogue in our dialogic reflection because we could reveal our vulnerabilities to each other. This democratic dialogue is the antithesis to the reticence when reflecting with a superior discussed in the next chapter, hence once again suggesting that dialogic reflection might be a better way to reflect. Nonetheless, achieving this degree of democratic dialogue was rather tricky. In this research, I possessed certain characteristics that allowed such a democratic dialogue between the co-researchers and me to occur, this will be further discussed in the Chapter Eight.

6.1.3. Dialogic Reflectors as Knowers and Enquirers

As an extension of democratic dialogue, dialogic reflection also recognises all its participants as reflectors who are at once knowers and enquirers. This understanding also means that these reflectors are respected for the knowledge they bring to the research and their interest in the topic of research, regardless of how similar, different, or even contradictory and contentious.

Epistemic participation in Co-operative Inquiry means that co-researchers have a part in creating knowledge about themselves (Heron 1996).

The researchers as knowers participate and get involved as subjects in the experiences that are to be known and that are the focus of the inquiry. Furthermore, the subjects' experiences involve forms of knowing that participate in that to which these forms relate. (Heron 1996, p. 20)

As knowledge generated from Co-operative Inquiry is from the participation of the researchers in the experience, the researchers are also the subjects of research. Heron (1996) reasoned that knowledge is generated in this manner because of the human condition,

The researchers can't get outside, or try to get outside, the human condition in order to study it. They can only study it through their own embodiment, through the full range of

their human sensibilities, in a relation of reciprocal participation and dialogue with others similarly engaged. (Heron 1996, p. 21)

The understanding of the topic of research is crafted through the embodiment of the experience by the researchers themselves. Enquiry in this nature is experiential and intersubjective and the researchers share an understanding of the world that is created through a shared lived experience. In dialogic reflection, this understanding is not only crafted from a shared lived experience. To respect researchers as knowers, it is also imperative to accept that these researchers bring with them knowledge and experience prior to the enquiry. While in Co-operative Inquiry, this epistemic participation is from the point of the start of the enquiry, dialogic reflection goes beyond that and accepts prior experiences and knowledge that reflectors bring to the enquiry group as their contribution to epistemic participation.

By accepting that reflectors in dialogic reflection are knowers who bring with them to the research their own lived experience, dialogic reflection also accepts that reflectors may have differing interests and beliefs about the topic of research i.e. enquirers with different motivations. Hence knowledge generation in dialogic reflection is not valued by how well it can be generalised to the population outside the research group but what it means to each reflector in the group in relation to their interests, values, experience and knowledge.

Therefore, this principle of dialogic reflection recognises each researcher or reflector as different knowers and enquirers who may have different purposes of engaging in the enquiry. They are nonetheless important specifically because of these differences.

We don't see all sides of the same thing, unfortunately, as much as you try to, you are limited to what know, value and our prior experiences which is why we need each other to reflect with us so you get multiple perspectives and you get a more holistic picture of the experience. [Me in group one]

These differences between researchers are the reasons behind the multiple perspectives in the reflective group which is of great importance. Consensus is not the goal of dialogic reflection

and it is conflict that drives passionate dialogue and hence a deeper form of analysis. It is those multiple perspectives that enable dialogic reflection to be a multi-dimensional form of enquiry.

Early in the research, I had used term “collaborative reflection” to refer to what I now call dialogic reflection. This change was in response to my realisation of the purpose of dialogic reflection.

I am wondering the word ‘collaborative reflection’ is a misnomer for what we are looking at because collaborative reflection implies that all of us are contributing to produce something in the end. [Me in group one]

Collaboration implies that there is a product to be developed, such as a presentation or a report. However, this is not the case in this research. In dialogic reflection, each member takes home a new understanding that they have crafted for themselves. In line with constructivism, this newly constructed knowledge will differ depending on how the individual had experienced the dialogic reflection. Additionally, coming from different knowledge and experiences, each member joins the dialogic reflection with different motivations and perspective, therefore would also arrive at different learning points at the end. Dialogic reflection on the other hand, shifts the focus from production to participation in the enquiry.

6.2. Conclusion

Dialogic reflection in this thesis is understood by its three key principles:

1. It is a value-based way of knowing that allows the reflector to better understand his or her experience in relation to what he or she knows and what he or she has observed in that experience.
2. Democratic dialogue in dialogic reflection is about allowing reflectors to speak honestly and openly. Only through this can the dialogue be reflective.

3. Dialogic reflectors should be respected as individual thinkers with their own unique experiences.

These three principles are evident in the four themes of this research covered in the following chapters. Dialogic reflection is about bringing together a community of knowers and enquirers and engaging them in an artistic and natural dialogue about their own experiences. Fundamental issues in dialogic reflection call for a need to conceptualise it at the epistemic level in the first place. This will be covered in the next chapter.

Chapter 7. The Epistemic Conflict in Reflection and Dialogic Reflection

This chapter expands on the issues as discussed in Chapter Three: the nebulous nature of reflection and problems it caused. From the findings of this research, I argue that some of the confusion about reflection and dialogic reflection are a result of the different ways they are perceived. I believe these issues stem from a fundamental epistemic clash in these perspectives of reflection and dialogic reflection.

Reflection can be understood from different epistemological positions as discussed in the paradigmatic considerations in Chapter Four. Consequently, the focus of reflection is also understood differently. This becomes an issue when it confuses students as they try to understand the role reflection plays in their own practice. An implication of this epistemic clash is that students can become reticent about sharing their reflection with educators or clinical supervisors, giving rise to contrived, sterile and even false reflection.

By exploring these problems my co-researchers and I concluded that there are issues in the perception of reflection in education and practice, as a learning tool or a method of professional development. Therefore, we believe that there is a need to rethink our understanding of reflection and reflective practice at the fundamental epistemic level. Before we could understand how dialogic reflection can fit in the occupational therapy curriculum, we had to answer the antecedent question which was “what is dialogic reflection” at the epistemic level.

7.1. Confusion About Reflection

The confusion about the understanding of reflection and dialogic reflection, as discussed in Chapter Three, was evident in my research. The struggle to understanding dialogic reflection in

this research started with some difficulties in differentiating between the terms analysis, evaluation, and reflection. These terms were used in many models of reflection however, they were also used in very different contexts which resulted in confusion within the research groups.

Research group one initially differentiated between analysis and reflection, however this was something that we struggled on later as the research progressed. I explained this initial difference below.

I think analysis sounds very academic and very technical, looking at skills and how things have worked whereas reflection has got a deeper meaning to it because you question yourself and your beliefs about your own practice, so there is an additional depth. [Me in group one]

Eve from the same group gave an example of this.

When I think about it, a lot of the time on placement, it is more analysis and evaluation of my own actions. For example, my own reflection would look something like I brought that patient to the toilet but he didn't seem to be able to walk back on his own, what I have done wrong. And so it was analysing that very action or that very incident of bring the patient to the toilet and that's where the analysis ended ... What lacks is the additional layer of questioning myself in the sense where I question what does it mean for my own practice ... a lot of the time it is missing ... Of course, I analyse it as a therapist would or as a student would but then it feels a little superficial. [Eve in group one]

Reflection was considered to a deeper form of analysis. Analysis was considered to be a more superficial and impassive process of looking at the experience while the reflective process was a deeper, more emotional and perhaps spiritual exploration of one's experience. However, this was quickly challenged by other co-researchers in the same group:

Can you not analyse your feelings and thoughts though? [Nicola in group one]

I am thinking of a football manager and I am like surely they reflect because they go over games but is that analysing or is that reflective? [Eve in group one]

To save ourselves from this confusion, we turned to an example of a reflective model. With reference to Gibbs' (1988) reflective model (which can be found in Chapter Ten), we discussed the meaning behind the terms analysis, evaluation and reflection. To our dismay, we became even more confused with what these terms meant. The following exchange between my co-researchers and I captures this confusion:

It says here that evaluation is what was good and bad about the experience whereas analysis is what sense you can make of the situation. It is a bit vague. [Me in research group one]

A lot of them overlap, it is quite repetitive. [April in group one]

See the way I would make sense of the situation would be looking at the good and the bad of that situation. [May in group one]

We were even more confused when referring to a theory of reflection which was meant to aid the understanding of the reflective process. This confusion was evident in group two as well who was confounded by the terms "evaluation" and "reflection". The following dialogue illustrates this:

Is there a difference between evaluation and reflection? Evaluation, to me, is about making a decision about something either way, was it good or bad. Reflection is about exploring things and thinking about things. [Sophie in group two]

Would that mean evaluation is part of reflection? [Me in group two]

I think evaluation is a product of reflection ... Sometimes when you reflect, you come up with an answer or outcome. That's why evaluation is not reflection, evaluation is something that comes out of reflection sometimes. [Sophie in group two]

Olivia from group two questioned if this debate about evaluation and reflection was even of any importance:

We have done so much talking about thinking and changing all the time, are we reflecting? I don't know. Does it really matter? [Olivia in group two]

We got around this confusion by reconceptualising dialogic reflection as something more natural and organic. This is further elaborated in Chapter Eight.

Schön (1983), despite being considered the lead thinker of reflection, had provided very little explanation about how to go about doing it (Kinsella 2009). He meant for the concept of reflection to be deliberately nebulous, however, this led to many other theorists attempting to clarify the concept in different ways, ironically adding to the confusion about the topic.

7.2. Epistemic Conflict

Reflection, as an un-unified concept, is problematic because theorists theorised it from a myriad of different philosophical positions. Consequently, their theories of reflection came from disparate epistemic stances. As discussed in Chapter Four, reflection can be constructivist, empiricist or rational. These different epistemologies of reflection result in very different approaches to reflection and foci of the reflective processes.

Besides the theorists, this epistemic clash is also evident in the ways educators teach about reflection and the way practitioners use it. My co-researchers and I found that these different interpretations of reflection were evident in practice settings. These educators on placement appear to have different expectations regarding reflection and demonstrating reflective practice thus sending rather confusing messages to students.

7.2.1. Approaching Reflection from Different Epistemic Stances

In occupational therapy practice, reflection can be treated differently in different settings,

When I was on my placement they did regular reflection, it was quite militant in the way it was done. It was like "I must do a reflection because I haven't done one" [Eve in group one]

I remember being on a placement where they have not brought it up or anything. It's quite different on different placement and how people feel about it and approach it. [Lea in group two]

I think my educator viewed it [reflection] as when we are talking through supervision, she would be able to tell if I am being reflective. Some of it would occur just naturally and that's how she gauged it. [Sophie in group two]

While there are settings that are more relaxed in the need for reflection to be overtly demonstrated, there are also settings that perceive demonstrating reflection as a “must”. Perhaps, the difference here lies in how reflection is being understood by the reflector, whether it is an internal process that can be evident through daily professional practice or if it a process that needs to be made through explicit through writing and verbalisation. The difference in the focus of the reflection also hints at what is more important in reflection thereby suggesting the epistemic stance that is being taken.

Though not made explicit, a focus on the explicit demonstration of the reflective process through writing or verbalising suggests that the analytical process was of great importance, perhaps taking a more rational stance towards reflection. On the other hand, an appreciation of the internal processes of reflection and that it translates into one's professional practice suggests that knowledge constructed from the reflective process becomes inherent in the way the occupational therapist conducts his or her practice. This would suggest a more constructivist approach towards reflection.

These epistemic stances were more apparent when educators guided students on their reflection. While a few co-researchers noted that they had educators who wanted objective reflections, reflections that do not include any emotional consideration, the following co-researcher noted a more extreme case of such an approach as adopted by her educator.

I did a couple of Gibbs reflection which she [educator] was like “I am not really interested in how you feel, I want to see the analysis”. So, she recommended that I did S.O.A.P.

notes ... I tend to be a little waffle-ly so that's why I think she wanted me to use an analysis framework. [Ava in group two]

S.O.A.P. is an acronym for subjective, objective, assessment, and plan. It is a report writing style that occupational therapists may use commonly in writing case notes about interactions with service users. Being a report, it does not involve the analysis of feelings or thoughts. It serves as an objective record of the interaction between the occupational therapist and service user. Using such a format for reflection reduced the process to a factual recount of the experience which led co-researchers in group one to question "what is the point of it then?" Such an approach to reflection suggested a reductive version of the empirical stance where the focus of reflection is the sensory experience. Observations take priority over the analysis or even the recognition of emotions and thoughts that the reflector experiences.

Ava also noted a difference in the attitudes towards reflection in her prior placements.

My last educator loved Gibbs' model of reflection and she was like "I am so happy to know that you are feeling content" and I thought: oh, this is very different from the last one who said "don't tell me, I'm not interested, take this out." She crossed out my feelings in my reflection. [Ava in group two]

This difference in epistemic stance towards reflection contradicted the student's own perception of reflection. I asked Ava if she agreed with her first educator's attitude towards reflection, to which she replied,

I didn't. I did those for her and I did some Gibbs' ones for myself, I valued them more but she definitely wanted to see that she had evidence that I was paying attention to what she was talking ... I think she used it as a measure to see how much I understood from what we did... [Ava in group two]

Ava saw a conflict between her educator and her in the approach towards reflection. She preferred a reflection which appreciated the thoughts and feelings that she had experienced and Gibbs' (1988) model of reflection had encouraged her to explore them further. However,

she believed her educator perceived reflection to be evidence of her understanding from the fact that her educator had requested her reflections to be devoid of her emotions. While Ava was more certain in her own understanding of reflection and saw this difference as a conflict, there were other co-researchers who were confused about it.

My educator on my last placement, I had written two reflections and the first one she said I was being too general about the situation and what happened and I was being more true to the facts whereas the second one I got into more detail about what I have learnt from the situation and that was more what she wanted to see. But at the same time, she also said reflection shouldn't be too much about how I felt and it was not perhaps what the situation was so there was a little bit of confusion really. [Geri in group one]

This suggested that perhaps educators themselves were confused about what reflection was. This can be expected if reflection was perceived differently from a fundamental epistemic level. These differences thus manifest themselves in the way educators guide students on reflection. Students hold a certain perception of reflection and it becomes confusing to them when it conflicts with that of educators.

Reflection is contested at a fundamental level and theorists debate over how one can know from experience. This conflict manifests in the students' and educators' different expectations of what reflection should look like. While some were able to see this as a conflict, some were left confused about the mixed messages. This confusion is perpetuated when confused students become educators and have to guide others on reflection.

7.2.2. Reflection and Dialogic Reflection as More Than a Rational Process

Another example of the epistemic clash is in our disagreement with Dewey's (1933) rational perspective of reflection. We believed that while reflection is rational, it is also an emotional process. In Chapter Ten, I add to this discussion by arguing that dialogic reflection is an emotional and moral process as well.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Dewey (1933) wrote about reflection as form of rational thought which is triggered by a state of perplexity and an enquiry directed at revealing facts to challenge or support the suggested belief. Reflection requires one to challenge one's beliefs and thoughts, thus, it is a painful process.

Reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful. (Dewey 1933, p. 13)

Reflective thinking requires a disciplined mind that is willing to challenge what is being taught or observed. A disciplined mind thus allows one to be intellectually independent due to its ability to self-manage and develop. The purpose of education is thus to develop a disciplined mind which Dewey (1933) perceived to be positive and constructive. However, he also acknowledged that discipline is painful because it forces the mind away from congenial concepts and at times challenges them (Dewey 1933).

We felt this difficulty as well and this suggested that it was not always easy to be as disciplined or be as rational as Dewey (1933) had expected.

*I know I might be a bit of a perfectionist and I want to be able to do it right and sometimes admitting to yourself that you could have done better. I do it but it is not nice.
[April in group one]*

I find it hard to admit to certain mistakes or shortcomings as a therapist. It is hard, do-able but I think it is hard. [Me in group two]

However, we disagreed with Dewey's (1933) rational perspective of reflection. We thought of reflection and dialogic reflection as more than rational; it is also an emotional process. This pain that Dewey (1933) referred to was not only a result of suspending beliefs but also a consequence of the fact that reflection is inherently emotional. Reflection requires one to bare oneself: faults,

vulnerabilities, and all. It requires a great degree of openness and acceptance (Fay 1987) and it is even more challenging when done dialogically.

He [educator] was analysing like it [written reflection] was an essay and he was pulling faces ... Actually, it made me feel quite raw and quite exposed and even though I had written it in a way where I didn't really say what I truly felt. [Sarah in group one]

I am not so keen on other people seeing my reflection, because it's like identifying a problem in the way I work and do things. [Nicola in group one]

Another reason why reflection can sometimes be difficult and painful is the fact that it requires one to take apart experiences that, often, are negative in nature.

I find that with the [reflective] models and even on placement, an individual reflection seems to push in more of a direction of looking at things that you have not done so well rather than things that you have done well. [April in group one]

Personally, I think it encourages us to look at negative experiences. There is more to analyse, there is more to evaluate and there are more learning points [Me in group one]

There were some negative things but there were also some positive things as well but it is funny how the negative things stick ... [Lea in group two]

We justified our concentration on adversity with the belief that there is more to learn from them, alluding to our instinct to problem solve. Reflection shares an intimate relationship with problem-solving. Dewey (1933), whose work served as a foundation for many reflective theories, defined reflection as a problem-solving method. In the same vein, Jarvis (1992, p. 180) stated that reflection “seeks to problematise many situations of professional performance so that they can become potential learning situations”. While reflection can be seen as rational in this sense, the interest in negative experiences inevitably evokes some emotions in the reflector.

Reflecting on negative experiences breeds negative emotions (Vachon and Leblanc 2011) which in turn lead to the narrowing of the mind and the fear of new experiences (Isen 1987). Reflecting on positive experiences lead to more creative solutions, greater motivation and more positive

emotions which consequently lead to a greater willingness to try new experiences (Fredrickson 2002; Isen 1987). In addition, this perpetuates a negative interpretation of the nature of reflection where the critical evaluation of practice is the focus, i.e. concentrating on what was done poorly and how to change in the future, instead of figuring out what was done well and how to do that even better (Wong et al. 2016).

I saw this difficulty in negotiating our own reflections as sign that my co-researchers and I perceived reflection beyond rational problem-solving. We found it emotionally difficult because we were treating reflection as an emotional process as well. While we agreed that problem-solving is a component of reflection, we were reflecting on more than the descriptive reality of the experience. When we chose negative experiences to reflect upon, we were also reflecting on how we had felt during that experience. Reflection for us became beyond analysing and evaluating the factual occurrences of the reflection, an approach which can be deemed more rational. At that point, I was unable to pin point a specific epistemic perspective of reflection that we had agreed upon. However, it was clear that there are many approaches to reflection which contributed to the confusion that we faced.

7.3. Implications of Epistemic Conflict

Aside from the confusion in practice that it has caused, the epistemic conflict also resulted in some problems in the education, where students are expected to demonstrate their ability to reflect and be assessed on it. This gives rise to false reflection, which is contrived, sterile, and in certain extreme cases, fabricated (Russell 2005; Wong et al. 2016).

7.3.1. True and False Reflection

My co-researchers and I negotiated the epistemic differences between us and our educators and supervisors by being admittedly less than honest in our own reflections.

Dialogic reflection is not an easy process and requires one to reveal weakness and to prod at unpleasant experiences. When dialogic reflection is conducted in the form of supervision, it adds an additional layer of difficulty because the student is expected to reveal himself or herself to a superior. In many instances this resulted in some reticence where the reflection that was presented was, to a certain degree, false.

It is hard when you are reflecting with someone to offer a true reflection, I don't know, sometimes I find that when I look at my own practice, it is also hard to be completely honest to yourself that you have done something wrong or you lacked knowledge in certain areas. [Me in group one]

You are not going to do a true reflection or be really honest about what you are feeling and thinking deep down if someone is going to read it. [May in group one]

I feel like you need to get it all down out on paper and then edit it, I feel that is the most natural way, be totally honest with myself, get it all down there and then depends on who is reading it, then alter it. And that almost feel like a refined version for whoever is gonna read it. [Isabella in group two]

There is always a truthful reflection behind an untruthful one. [Alicia in group two]

These false reflections were edited versions of a true reflection, often impassive and devoid of the rich emotions and deep thought that occurred. To a certain extent, it was a more objective version of reflection where we felt protected by not revealing too much or only revealing what that cannot be contested, i.e. a factual descriptive account of the experience.

Writing reflection is often a common method of measuring a student's ability to practice reflectively. However, assessing this writing, as indicative of an ability to reflect, has resulted in reflection being treated as an artificial and superficial process of demonstrating professional competence.

My reflections are quite private, almost personal, because I was reflecting on the educators or on the setting and they did read them. And I was a bit like "oh god, can't

remember what I have written now or if I have offended them" ... I felt like I wanted to write one for me and then one for them. [Isabella in group two]

Isabella had stated that her reflections were private and personal in nature hence resulting in her apprehension about sharing them with her educators. Such reticence had caused her to want to write one for her own private use and another more acceptable version for her educators that would be less personal. She had also insinuated that her private thoughts and feelings may be deemed as offensive to others and by feeling this way, she had felt that a more sterile version of her own reflection was more suitable for assessment. This showed the effects of assessing reflection which reduced the rich and emotional process of reflection to something more rational and logical which students considered more acceptable to educators.

Sophie in group two shared an experience she had on her placement where she had not gotten along with her educator. A particularly bad incident had resulted in an altercation between her and her educator.

I felt that she was shouting at me and then the next day morning she was like "I want you write a reflection on what happened yesterday" and I felt like saying everything about her but instead I made it all about myself. [Sophie in group two]

The group reacted with sympathy and I pointed out the potentially damaging consequence of her false reflection.

It could be quite self-destructive writing something like that blaming yourself for everything, I mean it's one thing to point out your flaws but it another to ... internalise everything ... to make it all about you, putting all the blame on yourself, that could be quite damaging to your own practice. [Me in group two]

While this was a one-off case that emerged from this research, it is possible that false reflections may have rather damaging consequences to a student's development. Group one however noted that since a false reflection is a façade for the true reflection, the learning process has not been discounted as the true reflection still occurs.

When reflection is to be conducted dialogically, it is often better; however, finding the right reflective partner is an issue (Boniface 2002). Supervisors tend not to make the best reflective partners due to their superior position, because they are judging the reflector's progress and assessing their practice, which makes the reflector reticent. The difficulty of expressing oneself honestly under this circumstance stems from the vulnerability that one experiences. Therefore, the presence of a superior in a reflective environment may be overpowering and may prevent one from being able to fully analyse oneself (Harvey and Struzziero 2008) due to the fear of vulnerability. There had been cases where students had fabricated experiences to reflect on to demonstrate their prowess rather than reveal their fallibility (Russell 2005). The intense pressure to do well academically had led to reflective assignments to be unrepresentative of a student's analytical and evaluative abilities. It had perpetuated a culture where students feel the need to demonstrate their abilities through their reflections. Consequently, reflective pieces produced are often contrived and sanitised of the messy reality of the true experience, just to achieve a better grade from the supervisor (Wong et al. 2016).

In addition to privacy, I saw that these false reflections were coping mechanism that my co-researchers and I had developed to defend our epistemic position on reflection while fulfilling our academic requirements. When educators impose their perspective of reflection on the students through assessment criteria or assignment marking rubrics, students can become unwilling to express their reflections from their own perspective of what reflection means to them. This is a result of the fear of being judged or being corrected as shown by the data that we had generated. These false reflections protected us from others who may view reflection differently, such as Ava's educator who "crossed out" her reflections on her feelings about the experience. As we saw reflection as an emotional process as well, a judgement on our reflections was also a judgement on how we felt. These false reflections, being edited and ready for review, are decoys of the true reflection. Assessments or critiques on them do not emotionally affect

the reflector as much. In other words, it is safer to produce false reflection because it does not bring to question our perspective of reflection.

False reflections were not always intended. Some co-researchers found that in order to be graded on reflection, they had to express their reflective process which they find very difficult.

I find it hard to express myself on paper, particularly with written reflection, I really struggle with it. I find it very superficial because if I am reflecting verbally with somebody or in a conversation with my educator, or even driving home like having a chat, I find that you can reflect on these little things naturally but as soon as I have been told to write it down, it becomes so bit-ty. [Eve in group one]

Assessing reflection is essentially assessing the cognitive processes that go on behind professional practice. It is expecting the student to express, in writing, these implicit processes and knowledge that is often beyond what words can describe (Polanyi, 1967). Assessing reflection in this way is essentially assessing how well the student is able to express his or her reflection not the reflection itself.

Gilbert (2001), drawing on Foucault (1980), noted that reflection can be perceived as a form of confessional however from what these research groups had noted, it is only so when one is completely honest when reflecting. Both research groups noted that true reflection was often not being shared. The confession of truth requires overcoming great resistance (Foucault 1981) and as these co-researchers have noted, a false reflection was the easier way out.

I think it defeats the purpose, doesn't it? If you can't be truthful when you reflect then what is the point of doing it. [Me in group one]

A false reflection is a carefully crafted confession, both of which are oxymoronic in nature. As I had noted here, what is a point of a false reflection? What is the purpose of a confessional if it is not true? If what was being assessed by educators was a false version of the true reflection, then to what extent was this assessment a true measure of their reflective ability?

Assessing reflection suggests that there is a good way to reflect and a bad way to do so. It often is a measure of a student's analytical abilities which can allude to a belief that the rational perspective of reflection is more important (Wong et al. 2016). This was troubling to both research groups because of our understanding of reflection as more than a rational process.

The false reflection is a product of the reticence that students face when engaging in reflection and expressing it. This reticence is often from a fear of judgement by others.

You are afraid that whatever you say may have an impact on your image socially and professionally which is why certain things are being brought up because you don't want to come across as being too critical. [Karen in group one]

I would leave out services as well, like how the services are being run and how I don't agree with how things are being done I just don't want them to see that I am criticising the service. [Olivia in group two]

My reflections are personal but I have had educators asking to read my reflections and very rarely would I say "I am wrong" ... part of me knows that at the end of the day, they will be reading it and they are judging my ability to be a professional therapist. [Charlotte in group two]

My co-researchers were very aware of how they were being perceived by others when they shared their reflections, leading them to edit, falsify or even refuse to share anything. Geri in group one noted that there were professional ramifications to writing a reflection as well. She found herself in a situation where she could have implied that a member of staff was negligent if she reflected truthfully.

I was trying not to drop the member of staff in it ... so I had to go around those things and not to make it like they had not done their job properly. [Geri in group one]

Karen from group one noted that sharing an honest and truthful reflection could be perceived as whistle-blowing which could have impacted her professional image. Hence there needs to be

a certain level of care when sharing reflection especially in the professional milieu and an awareness to “protect yourself” as Karen had put it.

While they are aware of the potential judgement others might make, some co-researchers also noted that they are concerned about the audience of their reflections and how they might feel when they read or listen to them.

How do you reflect effectively without making it personal to somebody? I don't think anyone had figured out a good way to do that. [Eve in group one]

I personally would not feel confident raising negative issues or things that we need to work on without thinking "how am I going to say this without causing offence?" [Nicola in group one]

False reflections, were defensive tactics that my co-researchers and I employed to protect ourselves from judgements by others on our reflections, our feelings and thoughts about the experience and our own perspectives of reflection. Amidst the epistemic differences, we decided to produce a reflection safe for reviewing. These false reflections were for the educators or supervisors rather than for ourselves.

7.3.2. Fish, Twinn and Purr: Strands of Reflection

The implication of this epistemic difference is also evident at a more macro level. This is best exemplified by Fish's work with Twinn and Purr (Fish et al. 1991).

In response to the positivist idea of Technical Rationality that was prevalent in the medical, health and care practice, Fish, Twinn and Purr developed Strands of Reflection (Fish et al. 1991). Strands of Reflection helped the practitioner delineate four aspects of an event which he or she can reflect upon. It was purposed to facilitate a better understanding of the clinical experience by pushing the practitioner from the technical rational perspective of the event to explore the artistic elements in practice (Fish 2012). To do so, Strands of Reflection required the practitioner to analyse and synthesise the following four aspects of the experience (Fish 2012, p. 40):

1. The Factual Strand – Recount the facts of the event
2. The Retrospective Strand – Identifying key patterns that emerged in the event
3. The Sub Stratum Strand – Uncovering and exploring critically the personal theory that underlies the piece of practice
4. The Connective Strand – Considering how present theory and practice might relate to future theory and practice

The Connective Strand highlights the fact that knowledge from an experience cannot be freely applied to another situation as practice situations are unique. Experiences are worth reflecting upon insofar as they offer learning points hence reflection should not be limited to the negative aspects of practice (Fish and de Cossart 2007; Fish 2012).

Fish (2012) noted that while Strands of Reflection garnered some popularity amongst occupational therapy and other healthcare professionals, it failed in diverting the focus of professionals to further explore themselves as a practitioner. While it encouraged one to probe at the artistic elements of practice in the Sub Stratum Strand, it was not successful at doing so. Fish (2012) felt that due to practitioners passing on Strands of Reflection from educator to student through a reductive method that can be perceived as instrumentalist. Instrumentalism is the idea advanced by Dewey (1916) that theories are useful to the extent of its ability to serve a practical purpose. However, when applied indiscriminately, it can strip theories of their rich philosophical and theoretical underpinnings to become tools of practice, a reduced version. This distortion resulted in Strands of Reflection becoming an instrument for general use by practitioners, when it was initially intended for supervisors to use with supervisees (Fish 2012). Strands of Reflection was reduced to be a rigid structure for practice, instead of a theoretical model which is to be used to supplement and guide the practitioner and his or her supervisor to better practice.

Despite the change in context, Fish (2012) found that professions still preferred a more reduced version of reflection - a method of critical analysis - despite it not being used critically. As a structure for practice, Strands of Reflection was used partially: often, the Sub Stratum and Connective Strands were neglected even though they are the most critical and challenging strands. The focus is placed solely on the Factual and Retrospective aspects which were more comfortable (Fish 2012), objective, straightforward and less artistic, once again reverting to the positivist perception of professional practice, Technical Rationality. The reductive use of the Strands of Reflection is because of the way some practitioners perceived reflection. When practitioners favour the Factual and Retrospective Strands, it suggests that they believe that they are sufficient for their own reflective practice. It can be interpreted that they build their reflective practice around facts and descriptive reports of their own experience of practice. This suggests that reflection, to them, is perhaps perceived from a more empirical and positivist stance. This is reductive, not because of their epistemic stance towards reflection but because of their use of their use of the theory which appears to stem from a constructivist position.

7.4. Conclusion

Reflection can be viewed from many epistemic orientations, these different positions value different aspects of the reflective process. However, educators may unconsciously project these epistemic stances onto students by attempting to teach them what reflection should look like. To students who had firm beliefs about reflection, these differing stances appeared to be conflicts; students who are still conceptualising reflection in the context of their own use were bombarded with mixed messages about reflection which resulted in some confusion about what reflection was to them.

The use of reflection can sometimes be reductive. Some professionals see reflection as an analytical tool or a method of problem-solving. In these instances, reflection can be reduced to an objective analysis of an experience, stripped of the emotions and thoughts that occur behind

it. Fish (2012) saw this as reverting to the Technical Rational model where the focus was on problem-solving rather than problem framing.

Reflection is nebulous however, that was how Schön (1983) had meant it to be. The lack of guidance on how to reflect has resulted in many other theorists to appropriate this concept in the context of various professional spheres to provide some clarity on the reflective process using different philosophical concepts. This thus caused further confusion about the process however as these theories are being applied out of context by other professions.

A disciplined and open mind is required for reflection to be successful (Dewey 1933). However, as there is a propensity to reflect on experiences that are negative in nature, it is harder to challenge oneself or even admit to being wrong. My co-researchers and I faced some difficulties emotionally when reflecting because we saw reflection as something more than a rational problem-solving process.

Reflection requires a great degree of vulnerability and this is even more difficult when done dialogically with someone in authority who may sit in judgement. False reflections, a façade of the true reflection, is often easier to share. Being edited, sterile and contrived, these false reflections are not accurate depictions of elaborate process that the reflector undergoes. They are a defensive mechanism that one may employ to protect one's perspective of reflection.

This chapter has illustrated some of the confusion about reflection and difficulties of conducting it in a monological and dialogical manner. This led us to question its use as a pedagogic tool, a method of professional development and a problem-solving technique. Considering that there are some fundamental differences in the theories and use of reflection, it was worth exploring dialogic reflection at the epistemic level. To do so, we had understood dialogic reflection at the epistemic level, leading us to eventually conceptualise it as an epistemology by its own right.

Chapter 8. Conducting an Enquiry Through Dialogic Reflection

Another finding of this research was that dialogic reflection can be perceived as an approach to enquiry in this research. I started the research using action research as a method of investigation and expected the research groups to follow the cycles of action research as Lewin (1946) had described. With reference to Chapter Five, I expected the groups to start from diagnosing what was worth enquiring in dialogic reflection, formulate a plan to do so, take action then evaluate and reflect on it. However, as the research progressed, the groups had indicated a preference for a less structured method which allowed for more natural discussions. This then eventually became a something I call a meta-dialogic reflection where the groups were reflecting dialogically on the topic of dialogic reflection.

Dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry is distinct in its lack of structure however this is not to say it lacks analytical acumen. In fact, analysis is a strong feature because it is centred around an iterative process of reflection and experiencing reflection, both arguably one and the same. While I had noted that the change in method of enquiry in this research was most apparent in session six, there were indications that this research can perhaps be considered a dialogic reflection from the outset.

This chapter concludes that since dialogic reflection can be considered as an approach to enquiry, it stands to be therefore considered as a way of knowing, as an epistemology. In Appendix K, I expand on this discussion by describing the roles that exists in dialogic reflection.

8.1. Dialogic Reflection as An Approach to Enquiry

The key principles of dialogic reflection are the mediating discourse, democratic dialogue and its participants as individual knowers and enquirers. The mediating discourse grounds the reflectors in value dimension. It emphasises the need to understand the purpose and use of the research. Grounding the reflectors in this dimension, reflectors then depart to develop the theoretical and practical discourses. As enquiry of this nature is value-based, its purpose is not to develop a completely consensual theory amongst the researchers rather it is about developing an understanding that is meaningful and valuable to the individual reflectors. These reflectors bring to the enquiry their own knowledge and experiences hence they should be respected as unique knowers and enquirers and not as a collective. Due to these differences, knowledge can only be constructed in dialogic reflection if democratic dialogue is present. While like Co-operative Inquiry, dialogic reflection can be hierarchical, members should feel comfortable enough to actively share their thoughts and feelings and through that, participate in the knowledge construction that is meaningful to them. These are the key principles of dialogic reflection and they are evident in dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry

Even though in Chapter Five I had mentioned that dialogic reflection was not a method of enquiry until session six, it was suggested in session one.

... what do you think a collaborative reflection would look like? [Me in group one]

Well ... this! [Sarah in group one]

Sarah was referring to the research session being a dialogic reflection. This possibility of dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry was already introduced very early in the research however both groups did not explore this until much later in the research. At that point of the research we were still theorising what dialogic reflection was and were rather focused on exploring what it was like to reflect dialogically, not realising that there were already doing it in the process. I had revisited this idea in my own reflective logs for both groups:

It is also very interesting to note in relation to methodology, both groups have exhibited signs that they are reflecting on the topic of reflection and collaborative reflection ... Perhaps this very act of participating in this reflection is also “action” in this action research. [My reflective log of session one]

The previous groups meeting seemed rather reflective in the sense that the members were reflecting on reflection and their experience of its use in practice and university hence I thought that by allowing the discussion to go where the group members take it would encourage them to reflect naturally ... [My reflective log of session three]

When writing this, I was still perceiving dialogic reflection as a technique that featured in the interactions between the co-researchers and me, not as a method nor as a methodology. In my mind, we were still conducting a Co-operative Inquiry using action research where reflection is a technique and a phase within action research. I was still able to see very clear cycles of knowing, which was characteristic of a Co-operative Inquiry (Heron and Reason 2001). Perhaps it can even be argued that the groups had started the research using dialogic reflection since the beginning except this cyclic structure of knowing eventually dissolved in the later sessions.

8.1.1. A Preference for a Free-Flowing Discussion

Since the start, both research groups had expressed a preference for free discussion in the research and dialogic reflection.

I kind of like it free form, just chuck it out, because it is not forced then... [Karen in group one]

I think if it is more natural, it is usually something that you feel strongly about reflecting on so being less structured would allow for a more real reflection ... more natural, more meaningful. [April in group one]

This discussion was about how we should structure the research and it was rather clear from the start that both groups desired a relaxed and candid environment for sharing their reflections. Co-researchers in group one believed that such an environment would allow “real reflection” to

emerge, alluding to the idea of true reflection as described in Chapter Seven. This true reflection is characterised by being more meaningful and natural.

When you reflect on your own do you think of "I think I am going to use Gibbs today, I'm just going to run the Gibbs' cycle in my head very quickly" it doesn't happen that way ... what's more important is what you take home from the reflection ... it is less to do with how many theories you are aware of or use. [Nicola in group one]

Nicola noted that reflection does not necessarily follow a structure like models of reflection may recommend. Similarly, in the research about dialogic reflection, it would have been unnatural to structure it using a model of reflection. Once again, this hinted that at the idea of dialogic reflection as a method of natural enquiry.

I had introduced both groups to the research conducted by Tigelaar et al. (2008) where a structured way of conducting dialogic reflection was used. Alicia quite sharply critiqued that:

Is that to avoid all the dialogue? Is that why they are doing it like that? To make it more efficient? Because when you reflect there is a lot of a lot of input whereas this sounds like very rigid, there is no cross analysis. [Alicia in group two]

This critique of Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) work indicated two possible points of conflict when structuring dialogic reflection: dialogue and efficiency.

Firstly, it is important to consider how a structure in a dialogic reflection affects the democratic dialogue in the reflection. While structures may be useful in encouraging participation, it is also a double-edged sword that may limit democracy and emancipation in the reflection.

Enforcing a structure for reflection can help include those who may find it hard to take part in discussions.

If you have got somebody who feels that he or she can't contribute for all sorts of reasons I think having structured questions makes things easier ... I used to be very shy and I think in my undergrad, it took me a long time to come out of my shell and take part in group

work because I could not feel like I could jump in and having a structure, having someone say, "alright it's your turn, answer the question" just got me to do it. [Sarah in group one]

Both groups agreed that structuring dialogic reflection can aid in getting the group started with sharing reflections especially early stages when group members are not as comfortable in doing so. Structures may allow equal space for each member to contribute however it may also limit those who choose to share more.

In doing that you are forcing participation at the same time people who share too much would be limited ... Structures can't last forever and can become too awkward to move on with. [Me in group one]

Both groups felt that while structures are useful to start with, they are nonetheless antithesis to natural dialogue hence it is not sustainable in the long run.

If you got those quieter figures or people who can't think of anything to say then having a structure especially at the beginning at the start of the group would perhaps encourage other people to contribute. But going back to it, I think it is quite an unnatural. [May in group one]

It was recommended by both groups that a dialogic reflection starts with a structure, using a model of reflection to get over the initial reticence and eventually transition to a more free-flowing discussion.

Secondly, it is also important what the purpose of these structures and how they support the purpose of a dialogic reflection. In the discussion about Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research, Isabella in group two noted it seems like a "more productive" way of reflecting however may appear to be more detached. An unstructured dialogic reflection, on the other hand, was described by some co-researchers as "in the moment" [Sarah in group one] and "impulsive" [April in group one]. However, I questioned if reflections were even meant to be productive in the first place. Reflection is inefficient and requires one to halt to think and experiment way of doing things which are only sometimes better, it is a process of trial and error (Schön 1983). In this vein,

reflection is anathema to organisations that prioritise efficiency. Reflections are perhaps productive in the long run as improvements are made as a result of it however these require a certain acceptance that some inefficiencies are required. If a dialogic reflection was structured such that it would be a more productive or efficient way of reflecting, then it would be arguably contradictory to what dialogic reflection is.

I had noted in my reflective log,

I have started this group where the members have already spent approximately nine months with each other in the curriculum, hence they are comfortable with each other and trust each other to a certain extent. It would be very different if I were to do this research with a new group of students who just joined the course. At present discussions about structures being useful for new groups and building trust through a structure are purely speculative and theoretical as we have not experienced it in the research. [My reflective log of session four]

Heron (1999) classified a highly structured group such as Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research as Apollonian, which is characterised by having a detail pre-defined programme. This research, which was loosely structured, on the other hand would be considered as Dionysian where decisions on activities or topics of discussions are dependent on the feel and motivations of the group (Heron 1999). This Dionysian planning that the research groups had used was heavily influenced by what we found of interest for discussion. For example, in first session, both groups decided that we wanted to better understand dialogic reflection and at that time, my co-researchers had just returned from a placement. Hence, separately and incidentally, both groups arrived at the same decision to conduct a dialogic reflection about dealing with difficult educators in session two. Later in the research, my co-researchers were more predominantly involved in PBL modules, dialogic reflections on PBL became more topical. I had noted in my reflective log,

Despite all the redirection and discussion about the differences between PBL and dialogic reflection, I have noticed that PBL experiences still remain the main topic of discussion during the dialogic reflection sessions. While we have had interesting reflective sessions about placement experiences earlier, they have not been recurring nor have they been as stirring as the reflective sessions about PBL. I think it is time to acknowledge this phenomenon ... that in a dialogic reflection, it is more natural or perhaps even helpful to talk about something that is affecting the members at that point in time. [My reflective log of session five]

I had tried on a few occasions to draw the differences between PBL reflections and dialogic reflections however I still noticed that the groups tended to veer towards talking about PBL issues. By session five, I had come to accept that this was an effect of Dionysian mode that the research groups found themselves in. My co-researchers in both groups agreed that dialogic reflection is rather naturally about what is topical. It appears that a dialogic reflective group prefers the Dionysian mode of enquiry and this corroborates with the recommendations that both groups had arrived at: to have a natural and free-flowing dialogue. The Dionysian mode is important for learning that features “strong emotional and personal growth dimensions” (Heron 1999, p. 80) and this is certainly true for dialogic reflection. The emotional and personal growth dimensions of dialogic reflection will be elaborated in Chapter Ten.

8.2. Facilitation

Facilitation was an important feature of dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry. Heron (1999) described three modes of facilitation:

- The hierarchical mode – where the facilitator has absolute power over the group processes and he or she leads the group by thinking and acting for the group
- The co-operative mode – where the facilitator share power with the rest of the group and he or she makes decisions with the group.

- The autonomous mode – where the group has the freedom to find their own way without any intervention by the facilitator.

In this concept of group functioning, I saw my facilitation of the groups starting from the hierarchical mode and developing into a combination of co-operative and autonomous mode.

The hierarchical mode was important to start the research. To obtain ethical approval to initiate the research, I had to review the literature around dialogic reflection, identifying the gap in knowledge and propose a research question and a method to answer this question. I made these decisions on the behalf of the research groups. This was also important to recruit the co-researchers as they needed information about how the research would proceed before consenting to participating in it.

However, as the research progressed, the co-operative and autonomous modes became the key feature as the research groups started making decisions jointly such as deciding on what to enquire and analyse. While in this mode, I had given up the power of decision making as the research progressed however I kept the responsibility of transcribing and making analytical notes about the session. This is further elaborated in the next section of this chapter. Though I was responsible for booking a venue, the arrangements were largely dependent on the co-researchers and I had to work around their curriculum times. An example of the autonomous mode was when the co-researchers directed the enquiry especially in the later sessions. In my reflective log, I noted:

*I ... allowed the group to guide the methodology of the research ... this has allowed a truer form of Participatory Inquiry, a method of inquiry directed purely by participants.
[My reflective log of session four]*

Nonetheless I was apprehensive about giving up some power over the methodology. I noted in my reflective log of session four, “I fear we may have deviated from action research”. However, I justified this at that time by returning to the principle of democratic dialogue and the

participatory paradigm as described in earlier. It was only through the autonomous mode that we arrived at the conclusion that dialogic reflection can be perceived as the approach to enquiry in this research.

8.2.1. Being the Facilitator and a Researcher

Mediating my roles, as the facilitator of the research and as a participant in this research, was a struggle at times. Like Heron (1999) had recommended, I found myself prompting the co-researchers in the group by playing roles such as the devil's advocate in the group. However, in doing so, I lessened my participation as a member of the research as I had to manage the discussions.

I have found it quite a struggle to manage my role as the devil's advocate whilst trying to participate in the discussions as I had listen to what the others are saying, analysing on the spot and driving the discussion, often I find myself missing the opportunity to do so as well due to the pace of the discussion. I risk allowing the research to turn into a focus group by doing so. Since group think is not much of a problem in this research as participants have such diverse experiences that they do not often all agree on something, I believe I do not need to pay as much attention on being the devil's advocate and allow the discussion to run naturally. In addition, there are occasions where other group members assume the role as well. [My reflective log of session two]

Negotiating the roles of the facilitator and reflector became easier after arriving at the above realisation. There were occasions when I had to assume a role of power in the research for example when I proposed that we evaluated the research progress in relation to the initial research objectives in session four or when I introduced topics for discussion that the other group had raised or when I concluded the research at the end. In these instances, it can be argued that I had adopted the hierarchical mode of facilitation however for most of this research, it was the co-operative and autonomous modes that were predominant.

8.2.2. The Perfect Facilitator

The key role of a facilitator in the research was to “drive reflections” and get group members to “think deeper and consider other aspects” of their experience as a co-researcher in group two had summarised. The facilitator of a dialogic reflection is also a guard from an agony aunt situation.

... where people voiced problems and nothing was done about it, no further analysis of the experience or what could have been done. [Olivia in group two]

Other major responsibilities include ensuring confidentiality and setting up group rules. However, the groups also mentioned that the groups had the ability to self-regulate and prompt each other to think deeper therefore there was potential for the groups to self-facilitate rather than requiring a specific member to solely play the role of the facilitator. In this research while I played the role of the facilitator, I was also a member in the dialogic reflection hence the research groups themselves were self-facilitating already.

The perfect facilitator for a dialogic reflection possesses six conflicting characteristics:

8.2.2.1. Possess Shared Experience but External from the Group

With reference to me, Eve made the following remark,

I think it helps not only you have similar experiences, but you have similar experiences in terms of your awareness of the people that we talk about and it makes it very relatable. [Eve in group one]

However, Sarah also noted,

Having an external person there I think you are right, when you are in a group, you need that person outside to talk about it ... when you all are in the same group, talking about the same thing going around the circle. [Sarah in group one]

The groups saw a need for the facilitator to be to a certain a part of the group but still maintaining a different perspective. The shared experiences were required to assimilate with

the rest of the members however, the members still appreciated a fresh eye on situations that they are discussing. This shared experience is elaborated in the next chapter.

8.2.2.2. More Knowledgeable but Not Superior

Referring to me, some co-researchers noted,

Because this is about reflection and you have done so much research about it and you have got a lot that you can offer us and guide what we are talking about, I think that is needed for something like this. [May in group one]

I think, Ken you are a previous student and everything so even though we express ourselves in this manner, we feel comfortable with you because of that, so I think not an educator who assesses our work but somebody who have been in that situation. [Charlotte in group two]

You are not marking us, you are not writing a reference for us so we can go "you know what, I did this and it is not particularly great" without thinking of the consequences of saying it. [Alicia in group two]

The groups appreciated my input and observations based on my interest and knowledge in the topic area. They had also appreciated the fact that I was not a superior to them and had no bearing on their grades hence they were able to trust me and be honest with their reflections. In the discussion of facilitators, both groups generally referred to lecturers however they also noted that,

I don't know how true that reflection would be with the lecturer around. [Eve in group one]

Both groups found it hard to trust lecturers who may sit in judgement of their reflections and thus we would rather err on the side of caution and protect ourselves by providing false reflections as discussed in Chapter Seven.

8.2.2.3. Confident but Sensitive

Often the facilitator was mentioned to have to take on the role of the metaphorical bad cop to address the issues that group members may be reticent about. This is a theoretical discussion that we had within the group and did not emerge as a requirement in our groups.

You need someone to be harsh to ask the right questions, as hurtful as it may be, and as damaging as it is to the group, it needs to be raised. [Me in group one]

We are not as direct as we should be, we beat around the bush a bit, a little woolly, because we don't want to offend or hurt anybody, so that is the way that we are, so you need that stronger figure to reflect deeper so these reflections are actually useful. [May in group one]

The research groups felt that because of the reticence they face about certain topics such as those that may be perceived as personal attacks, the facilitator could help them overcome this by addressing these issues. Hence to do so the facilitator needs to be someone with great confidence. However, this has to be done with tact as these issues are tricky to address in nature.

I had my reservations about empowering the facilitator with the task of addressing the difficult issues because of how it takes that responsibility away from the reflector. The sense of ownership of the reflection is removed when anonymised through the facilitator in this case, therefore, the reflection may be less relatable to the self.

In discussion of the perfect facilitator to guide the dialogic reflective group, I found myself in a unique position in both groups. While having shared experience of being an occupational therapy student, I was also not part of the co-researchers' cohort; while being familiar with the theories of reflection, I was not superior to the co-researchers and had no bearing on their academic grades; since I am not part of their cohort, I was able to address the difficult issues that they are reluctant to discuss but at the same time in a sensitive way as I was aware of the difficulties based on my prior experiences as a student. This had led us to discuss who else would be best to facilitate a dialogic reflection. The best solution was to have a senior student to

facilitate these reflections however this was not a feasible suggestion due to the time-tabling differences. This issue is further discussed in Chapter Twelve.

In summary, the perfect facilitator essentially requires a careful balance of three sets of contradictory qualities and this perhaps may not be feasible in the context of occupational therapy curriculum.

8.3. Dialogic Reflection for Enquiry and Analysis

I saw dialogic reflection similar to Co-operative Inquiry where it is also self-analysing. The analysis process in dialogic reflection is interpretational however, these interpretations are drawn not by a lone researcher from his or her observation of the data but drawn by group of dialogic reflectors from their multiple perspectives of themselves, of each other and of each other's experience. When placed in juxtaposition with models of reflection, the analysis method in dialogic reflection stands out as being more dynamic and rich in its consideration and knowledge construction and reconstruction. This is partly because dialogic reflection is not only constructivist but also demonstrates elements for rational and empirical influences as well.

8.3.1. Types of Analysis and Enquiry in Dialogic Reflection

I observed six different ways dialogic reflectors analysed and enquired in a dialogic reflection in this research:

1. Commenting – This was the basic form of analysis that where a member stated his or her analysis of the issue
2. Prompting – This could be asking questions to clarify or asking questions to prompt deeper or wider considerations.
3. Suggesting – This was where a member suggests solution or an alternate perspective of the situation.

4. Comparing – This form of analysis was where a member compared the situation with his or her own experience. Sometimes this was also how members contribute their own experience to the reflection.
5. Speculating – This was a powerful form of analysis where a member generated new possibilities by changing certain elements of the situations that was being discussed. This was often initiated by the phrase “what if ...”
6. Role Reversal – This form of analysis was dynamic in the sense that members offer multiple perspective to the situation by swapping roles with the reflector or view the situation from another point of view.

These six forms of analysis and enquiry were indicated in the excerpt of a transcript below. In this excerpt, group two recounted difficult situations they had experienced with their educators on their placement and reflects dialogically with the group. The purpose of this excerpt is to exemplify the multiple analytical methods adopted in a dialogic reflection.

Transcript		Analysis Method
Alicia	<p>I think it is great that you learned from it but I think it was a little bit unprofessional of her and I don't know if that is a good way to be with a student, to be nasty to them and say that they are resilient, I'm not 100% sure that is a good teaching strategy</p> <p>She didn't think that she was at the end, that she was nasty</p> <p>But you obviously experienced it and it is not acceptable</p> <p>How did you feel though, not being able to challenge and have to accept things that you don't believe in?</p> <p>In the beginning I was really distraught and thought: what am I going to do because I don't know how to get through this. I just felt as time went on I thought: this is not going to be forever, and one day you are going to be on your own. Also I learned that all the OTs they work in completely different styles, I sort of learned not to be so critical of myself as well and it is ok to make mistakes sometimes, I wasn't that bothered in the end.</p> <p>But that's a shame, you obviously dealt with it really well, imagine if you were someone that couldn't handle it ... that could have made or broke you. And that's really sad</p> <p>After I did wonder that, I did reflect what if I had not sort of toughened myself up and sort of crumbled, I suppose the uni would have become more involved because they did come out to see me earlier, they did not come out to see me half way they came to see me on the second week and then they came to see me half way as well, I had 2 visits. it was useful as well.</p>	Commenting
Sophie		Commenting
Alicia		
Me		Prompting
Sophie		Commenting
Lea		Speculating
Sophie	<p>After I did wonder that, I did reflect what if I had not sort of toughened myself up and sort of crumbled, I suppose the uni would have become more involved because they did come out to see me earlier, they did not come out to see me half way they came to see me on the second week and then they came to see me half way as well, I had 2 visits. it was useful as well.</p> <p>Cause you flagged it up?</p>	Commenting
Ava		
Sophie	<p>No she actually called them because what was happening, I thought she was so horrible I was stopping myself to engage with her as much and she was taking it as I was being really withdrawn. Because I never actually said it "actually the reason why I didn't want to speak to you is because I find you really really scary and horrible" but the</p>	

<p>more I sort of thought: I know she is very scary and not very nice but you are going to have to initiate and approach her any way and it got better from there on.</p> <p>Isabella I think it makes you so aware of yourself when you are forced to speak to her and you sort of analyse it yourself don't you?</p> <p>Sophie It is not easy to talk to someone when you are feeling really awkward about them you know.</p> <p>Alicia I am just thinking how horrible that is because you are really vulnerable as a student we all are, when we go into these settings and we don't know anything about them I just think to walk into that, it is just not fair it is not acceptable.</p> <p>Me If you were her, how would you have dealt with that?</p> <p>Olivia I don't think mine was great to be honest, she won't even say good morning (Ava mine was like that) it was a big team so I just kept saying "there are loads of people here" and I got my head down and got on with it, but I kind of wanted a mean educator. I got on with my first 2 and I was worried that I would get a really mean one (Lea I am scared of that). Cause some people have said that they had not great ones and things and its gonna come to you at some point.</p>	<p>Commenting</p> <p>Role Reversal</p> <p>Role Reversal/Prompting</p> <p>Comparing</p> <p>Commenting</p>
<p>Alicia Did you feel like your odds are up now?</p> <p>Olivia I kind of wanted to know how to deal with a person like that thought it would develop myself because I have got along with people I work with and I think that I would need the challenge, don't get me wrong I could have stand up to her and say like "you are quite rude and dismissive and I don't feel like I fit in here" cause I just wanted to pass and I just saw what I wouldn't want to be as an educator that is what I got from her. While you said you could have used yours as a resource, I didn't think I had that either, wasn't really sure what I was learning so that was even more of a battle, I just took it upon myself to learn some stuff but I was quite restricted on what I can do, but not on a clinical level but just on a personal level, some of the little things like coming in and saying good morning</p>	<p>Prompting</p> <p>Commenting</p> <p>Comparing</p>

	<p>and like you I withdrew myself and chose to sit the other end of the office because I felt like I was a hassle, even though I wouldn't say I am someone who bothers people a lot I just felt like I was extra work for her and I didn't want anybody feel like that, so I physically took myself out of the office, my back was turned I had my head down and she was kind of thankful for that but for your educator she interpreted it as there is something wrong with her whereas that is not what I am like if I feel wanted, there are things like I would be with a patient and I would be thinking of things and I just forget the basics (Alicia felt like different person) yea, I felt like I took 10 steps back (Isabella it knocks your confidence) and least of all how it changed the way I practiced as well, the way I felt.</p>	Commenting
Me	<p>I have got a similar experience as you, my first assessment was in an acute stroke unit and that was intense already so I remember turning up on the first day and I was being told outright that by my educator that "don't think about it, you will never distinction on this placement" and that was the first thing she said to me "you are here to learn so you will not be good enough" so I literally just walked in and I was capped at a pass and that was a horrible feeling, that was the first day when I first started. And being a student, you kind of accept that as life and move on.</p>	Comparing
Lea	<p>Should you have said, at your half way should you have said, I know you maybe wouldn't feel like doing that, I wouldn't feel like doing that, but that is the sort of the thing... could you... I wouldn't have the guts to go the half way tutor or the placement team and say, "look this isn't fair"</p>	Suggesting Role Reversal
Me	<p>When I talked to my half way tutor, I tell him that everything was fine. I felt like I couldn't have said anything</p>	Comparing
Ava	<p>Especially when you have both in the same room as well, my half way tutor will see me and my educator at the same time and I was like can we not be seen separately because if I have something to say I wouldn't say it in front of them. My educator just said she didn't want students and she didn't have time for students (Alicia my god) yea</p>	Comparing
Charlotte	<p>Mine was like "oh I booked a holiday and I didn't planned for you be here" and I felt so bad</p>	Comparing

Me	You felt unwanted	
Charlotte	And I was like oh my god she was on holiday	
Ava	Yea my kept telling how she didn't want to take students again, and I thought "it's not my fault!"	Comparing/Commenting
Alicia	Oh my god don't they have any pre-training as an educator?	
Ava	They must do	
Isabella	They can fail you on placement, give you a bad mark but you can't do anything to them so they are in a lot of power	Commenting
Olivia	The reason why this keeps going on is because we don't say anything. I am saying it now but I have left that placement now. Don't get me wrong, there are a lot of placements out there but it just wasn't great and the placements don't have a clue about that	
Alicia	But I would hate for another student to go to Sophie's educator because what if someone hasn't developed that level of resilience	Speculating
Isabella	What if that was an undergraduate student there, at least we are mature enough to ...	Speculating

These analyses were offered through an unstructured interaction between the researchers in the group, nonetheless they were useful in prompting deeper and broader analysis in the other group members about their own experience and their perspective of the experience of others. It validated dialogue and reflection as a method of enquiry and analysis.

In comparison to reflective models that structure the analysis of the experience using prompting questions, dialogic reflection offers a more dynamic and multi-dimensional analysis. In Johns' (2013, p. 37) model for structured reflection, he utilised the following prompts for reflection:

1. What issues are significant to pay attention to?
2. How were others feeling and why did they feel that way?
3. What was I trying to achieve, and did I respond effectively?
4. What were the consequences of my actions on the patients, others, and myself?
5. To what extent did I act for the best and in tune with my values?
6. What knowledge did or might have informed me?
7. How does this situation connect with previous experiences?
8. What assumptions govern my practice and what factors influence the way I feel, think, and respond to the particular situation?

The model for structured reflection (Johns 2013) appeared to be similar to the analysis in dialogic reflection. Question four suggests some role reversal where the reflector explores the impact of his or her actions on others. This is however limited as it does not prompt further thought into the feelings and thoughts and reasoning behind the action of others in the experience. Some elements of comparison of experiences is evident in question seven. However, this only prompts the reflector to compare his or her experience with his or her own prior experiences, not with that other reflectors in the group.

The language which Johns' (2013) model uses suggests that it is meant to prompt the reflector to converse with himself or herself (Johns 2013). While this conversation between the reflector

and himself or herself may be deemed as dialogic, it remains monologic. This is also similar to Gibbs' (1988) cyclical model. There is no accommodation for any external input from a peer or supervisor, even though Johns (2013) had developed the model based on his experience as a guide for reflection. In developing this model, Johns (2013) hoped to spur reflectors to think more critically about their work through a reflective conversation between themselves and their practice. This method of analysis lacks the multiple perspectives that dialogic reflection, as described in this chapter, has to offer. While there are some similarities, dialogic reflection stands unique from these models of reflection (Gibbs 1988; Johns 2013) because of the dynamic method of analysis that occurs in the reflective dialogue. This is especially so for the comparing, speculating and role reversal analytical methods.

8.3.1.1. Comparing

By using this method of analysis group members place their own experience in juxtaposition with that of others. A good example of this is illustrated in the excerpt when Olivia compares her experience with that of Sophie's, indicating that the difference in circumstances resulted in her being unable to think positively about her own experience with her difficult educator. In the monologic form of reflection, we noted that there usually a constant comparison with prior experiences that we had to better understand how the new experience is different and to make a judgement on it. However, in the dialogic form, this comparison also occurs with experiences that other people had. These further builds on the wealth of experience upon which the reflector is able to draw learning from.

8.3.1.2. Speculating

Speculating in a dialogic reflection refers to postulating the implications if certain elements were to change in the experience. In the excerpt, Alicia and Lea speculated what might happen if the student of the difficult educator was someone who was less emotionally resilient. In doing so, they had suggested certain modifications of the experience which produced a new experience upon which the group can reflect on. This method of analysis is powerful in the sense that it can

produce countless imaginative scenarios that the reflectors in the group may not have even experienced themselves.

8.3.1.3. Role Reversal

Role reversal analysis is an extension of speculation. Reflectors slip into the someone's shoes in the experience to offer their perspective of the situation. This is exemplified by Lea's response to Aria's experience where she speculated the weakness and reticence she would have felt if she were Aria in that situation. This is a powerful method of analysis since it places the member in the reflector's experience and allows the member to picture what his or her thoughts, emotions and actions might have been.

8.3.2. Natural Dialogue as Analysis

While I have categorised the interactions in the dialogic reflection as commenting, prompting, suggesting, speculating, comparing and role reversal, my co-researchers perceived these interactions as natural in their own dialogue.

I think that it something that you naturally do when you reflect, I mean we instinctively compare it to existing experience and I think that's what reflecting is. ... I think it is more explicit when you do it that way where we all sit round and bounce off each other and go yea, I have something similar and this is what happened in my head, but I think it brings it out. [Sarah in group one]

Whenever anybody says, "I've done this" I would think like "what would I do". [Sophie in group two]

Its human to compare yourself, inevitably, to others. It's hard not to. [Ava in group two]

The analysis methods used in dialogic reflection was not intentional, it was a result of a natural dialogue and reflective process. However, they also suggest that these analytical methods are also used in monological sense, the dialogic reflection provided an environment where these analyses can be made explicit through dialogue. Therefore, it also suggested that dialogic reflection can make explicit the implicit processes reflectors experience but may find tricky to

express (Polanyi 1966). As enquirers in a dialogic reflection, these analysis methods legitimised dialogue as a method of conducting enquiry and constructing or reconstructing knowledge.

Knowledge is often defined as “objective and analysable” (Halling et al. 1994), Palmer (1983) argued that this is because the pursuit for knowledge is driven by curiosity and control (Foucault 1980). However, as a result knowledge from human experience is often deemed as unreliable as it is subjective and unquantifiable (Palmer 1983). This thus detaches us from the natural world, since knowledge is not elicited from experiencing the world but studying it from outside. Dialogic reflection here challenges this by asserting that knowledge can be generated through understanding ourselves and our experience of being in the world. This form of knowledge, though subjective, abstract and unmeasurable, is valuable because it situates us in the world. Knowledge creation of this form is active in the sense that we are actively engaged in creating it through epistemic participation and meaningful because we are part of the process of knowledge creation (Heron 1996).

8.4. Conclusion

As an approach to enquiry, dialogic reflection does not require a structure however models of reflection can help kick start a group into sharing their reflection. It was recommended that the discussions were eventually allowed to flow naturally and develop organically. Facilitators are useful to prompt and guide however they are tricky to pick because of the seemingly conflicting characteristics that they should possess. The dialogic reflectors have also noted that they were able to self-regulate the group hence a facilitator may not be that crucial. The analysis methods demonstrated naturally in a dialogic reflection are in some ways more dynamic and richer than what some models of reflection can offer, hence it may suggest that it could be a better way to reflect.

Knowledge creation in dialogic reflection is subjective, abstract, and unquantifiable. Unlike action research or Co-operative Inquiry, this knowledge creation is not procedural. Unlike

models of reflection, this knowledge is created through dialogue with others. Knowledge creation in dialogic reflection is in the messy, organic, multi-dimensional dialogue about the researchers' experience and does not take on a procedural approach of knowledge cycling like in Co-operative Inquiry. Therefore, I saw dialogic reflection being an approach to enquiry distinct from Co-operative Inquiry. Despite being unstructured and dynamic, the analysis afforded through the reflective process gives it rigour in its process of knowledge generation. Like Co-operative Inquiry, knowledge generated is grounded in the reflectors' embodiment of the experience and deep reflections about that experience. In addition, this approach to enquiry is also a social process which affords it multiple perspectives. This is further elaborated in the next chapter.

Chapter 9. A Community of Knowers and Enquirers

In Chapter Six, I have introduced the key principle where dialogic reflectors are knowers and enquirers who possess different experiences and knowledge. Dialogic reflectors are independent thinkers with their own motivations for engaging in dialogic reflection. This chapter discusses how these independent minds can work together in dialogic reflection.

I start this chapter by discussing this individualism and uniqueness through the idea of worldmaking. Worldmaking was not something that emerged from my initial literature review, but it was an idea that was considered by the two research groups. After sharing with the groups what I had read about worldmaking, I found that we could use the same ideas to understand what was happening in a dialogic reflection. We applied this idea of worldmaking in the dialogic reflective environment and developed it into something I called group worldmaking. Group worldmaking is about creating an environment for group members to share their reflection. This is largely dependent on one's willingness to trust and show one's vulnerability, therefore, confidentiality in the group world is an important factor. As a result of confidentiality, a group world is highly protective of the individuals within it. While the group world is inclusive of these participants that contribute to its creation, it also excludes those who are not willing to participate. A group world is rather unforgiving in this respect and the way to re-include excluded members is to break the natural flow of the group world by introducing some structure. The group world is a gathering of multiple world versions; thus, it provides dialogic reflectors with multiple perspectives that enrich their reflection on their experiences. Knowledge drawn from the dialogic reflective process by the individual is assimilated into his or her world version, changing the way the way he or she perceives the world.

9.1. Worldmaking

The theory of worldmaking which dialogic reflection is built on is drawn from oriental and occidental philosophies, from works namely by Wang Yang Ming (Henke 1916) and Nelson Goodman (1978). Wang (Henke 1916) was a Chinese Neo-Confucian philosopher whose work was centred around ethics and morality. He believed that understanding the self in relation to the world is the solution to social problems and the path to self-actualisation (van Norden 2014). Goodman's (1978) work, on the other hand, was focused on logic and epistemology which then led him to theorise about constructivism. Despite the stark differences in the philosophical backgrounds, they both arrived at a similar idea about world construction. Worldmaking here refers to the construction of individual versions of the world based on the different perspectives that we may have (Goodman 1978). These different versions are how we perceive the world through our experiences and they are no more or less important than another (Goodman 1978).

As a scholar in the Confucian tradition, Wang believed that the true purpose of learning is to build morality rather than to accumulate external knowledge such as literature and science (van Norden 2014). This moral knowledge is innate and leading a good life is all about allowing this innate moral knowing guide one's actions (van Norden 2014). Learning is about eliminating selfish human desires that cloud the guidance by one's innate moral knowing, and a good life is about trusting this moral guidance. Therefore, understanding the external world is of less importance, relative to understanding one's mind. This led Wang (Henke 1916, p. 307) to conclude that "the principles of things and affairs are not to be found external to the mind". Wang (Henke 1916) believed that the external world does not exist, and the world is actually a construction of the mind (van Norden 2014). Kim (2017) explained this more clearly below:

This redefinition of the external world is based on the insight that everything we can know about the world is mediated by experience. This experience is made possible by our sense organs. The activity of these sense organs is associated with the mind. Thus, all things that we encounter in our lives are necessarily associated with the mind. The world

so conceived is no longer an independent entity external to the mind, but an inseparable part of the mind. According to this picture, the external world exists always in reference to the self. (Kim 2017, p. 1)

Wang's redefinition of the world essentially means that the perception and understanding of the world is a product of the operations of the mind (Henke 1916). Thus, the world as seen through one's perspective is built on one's understanding of one's world. In Wang's work, there was an acceptance of multiple different worlds, based on our individual understanding of our interaction with the world (Henke 1916).

Goodman's (1978) work on worldmaking was born from his attempt to reconcile the logic in the two seemingly contradictory statements below:

1. The earth is at rest.
2. The earth moves.

To clarify, they should be understood as:

3. The earth is at rest, according to the geocentric system
4. The earth moves, according to the heliocentric system

Statements three and four give more explanation to statements one and two respectively. The earth is at rest, relative to the earth in the geocentric system, but moves when relative to the sun in the heliocentric system. However, statements three and four do not tell us about the world as they only inform us of what is true according to either the geocentric system or the heliocentric system. Therefore, if statements one and two are considered true in the same world, then there is a contradiction. Goodman (1978) resolved this contradiction by claiming that both statements are true but they are truths about different versions of the world.

As shown in the example above Goodman (1978) argued that there are contradictions that cannot exist in the same world. Puzzled by this, Goodman (1978) reconciled this illogical situation by postulating that there are many versions of the same world, and in each of these

versions, there are certain truths that may conflict with each other. In other words, these truths can only be true to that version of the world. Because there is a need for these multiple versions of the world to accommodate these multiple truths, then there is no need for an objective real world (Cohnitz 2016). These versions of the world would suffice because we can only have access to them (Cohnitz 2016). The existence of a neutral real world is perhaps an assumption; however, it is not worth discovery since it does not tell us how true or false each version of the world is (Cohnitz 2016).

Like how theories are built on other theories, world versions are made from other world versions, not made from scratch (Goodman 1978). Our world versions are made from our understanding of philosophy, science, art and all other disciplines that we study. Worldmaking is a complex process that requires constant remaking as new theories are accepted, old theories are rejected, or new discoveries are made as part of our understanding of the world (Goodman 1978; Cohnitz 2016). As these theories-in-use change with more experience (Argyris and Schön 1974), so do the world versions. Therefore, with this understanding, it can be concluded that we all have different world versions that we believe to be true.

Synthesising the works of Wang (Henke 1916) and Goodman (1978), it is concluded there exist multiple versions of the world that reside in our minds. These are worlds built on our understanding of our experience with the world and the theories that we use to arrive at them. Therefore, these world versions can be very different or similar to one another. However, they all are nonetheless true in relation to themselves and no more or less important than one another. Dialogic reflectors are reflectors that have different world versions in their minds. They see things differently from one another, have different values and interests from one another. This hence led to the conclusion that dialogic reflectors are unique knowers and enquirers and dialogic reflection should respect them as so. However, having unique knowers and enquirers in

the same dialogue can be seen as rather problematic when conflict arises. My co-researchers and I had resolved this with the concept of group worldmaking.

9.2. Group Worldmaking

The concept of group worldmaking is built on Wang's (Henke 1916) and Goodman's (1978) works. Philosophies such as empiricism presuppose a real external world which we try to understand. Worldmaking, however, does not deem the external world, whether it exists or not, as important (Henke 1916; Goodman 1978). It is the world version or the world as we perceive it that is of main concern here (Henke 1916; Goodman 1978).

The key assumption in group worldmaking is that as dialogic reflectors, our contributions to the dialogue influences the way others construct their world versions. A dialogic reflection is a gathering of multiple different world versions and perspectives. Through the methods of enquiry and analysis as described in the previous chapter, dialogic reflectors influence each other and hence change the way they may have perceived the world.

The idea of group worldmaking emerged as a theme from my observation on how reflectors questioned, challenged and protected each other within the group, how and why they developed trust and showed vulnerability and offered multiple perspectives to each other through reflection. The purpose of this chapter is to show how reflectors interact in a group context, as a community and the following sections on trust, confidentiality, inclusion and multiple perspectives demonstrate how this community forms, its mechanics and its value.

Referring to the research sessions, the co-researcher below made the following observation about engaging in dialogic reflection:

I would say though, we got to know more about each other from these groups ... we have done social things and that, but I feel like in these sessions as well, we have got the opportunity to bare ourselves and trust each other more. [Isabella in group two]

Dialogic reflection creates an environment where reflectors are safe to reveal a part of themselves for others and in doing so, allow others to get a better understanding of them.

Every time you talk about something, share your experience, question your friends on their experiences, you give other people a glimpse of what you value and what you see as important in life. [Me in group one]

Dialogic reflectors reveal in their discussions about their experience a part of the world that they have conceived in their mind, and along with that, their own values and knowledge. In sharing these personal insights, a group world is formed.

Unlike the world versions that Goodman (1978) had theorised, this group world is not an understanding of the external world. Rather, this group world refers to a protected, safe environment for co-operative analysis of experience and knowledge generation. Unlike a version of the world, it is not about conflating what the group knows to be true, rather it is an arena where knowledge is permitted to contradict or corroborate, and reflectors can question and debate with each other. The knowledge that one elicits from this process then inform one's world version, reaffirming it or deconstructing it. The group world is contentious yet compassionate; it is rich with shared knowledge and questions about the world. It is not about proving truths but about understanding opinions and differing perspectives, and through that, enrich one's own world version.

9.3. Vulnerability and Trust

There are some conditions to group worldmaking. To share personal experiences with someone, not to mention sharing a glimpse of one's world version, requires a certain degree of vulnerability. In group one, I questioned if it was possible for a group of strangers to reflect dialogically. The co-researchers responded that they think that it would not be as "honest" or "safe" to do so and "would be pretty shallow".

You would be like “how much can I share?” or “are other people going to be judging?”, “what is their role in this reflection?” [April in group one]

The degree of trust directly affects how much one is willing to share in one’s reflection. In contrast, in this research, a co-researcher noted that:

We have got an idea of each other’s values and boundaries. [Eve in group one]

Hence, the co-researchers are more inclined to trust each other to reveal their vulnerabilities through sharing of their own experiences and their world versions.

However, trust is not only required for sharing one’s world version but also to question another’s experience.

You have to really trust people in the group to say, “hang on a minute, stop and think about that again” without making them defensive about it. It would have to be somebody who knew me really well, who is calling on me, for me to stop and go “oh yea you are right”. Otherwise, it would feel like an attack. [Sarah in group one]

Not only are reflectors trusting each other to share experiences, they also need to trust each other to be open to being questioned about their thought process. This trust goes two ways between the reflectors and analysers in the group.

This led me to question why my co-researchers had trusted me enough to reflect dialogically with me. While my co-researchers had known each other for about six months before we started the research, I did not have that same amount of contact with them. It was puzzling to me that they were comfortable with reflecting me since the start of the research. Ava noted,

I think it helped that we met you before we started too because we became aware of you, more familiar and that led us to trust you then. [Ava in group two]

My observation sessions prior to the recruitment and information session were crucial in this trust-building process between my co-researchers and me. In that sense, when the research started, I was no longer a stranger to my co-researchers. By then, they felt comfortable enough

to open up to me. Throughout the research and even before, there were moments where my co-researchers asked me about my life and my own experience as a student. Occasionally, these questions jolted me mildly. Was I playing the role of the facilitator and the devil's advocate too often and was not being a reflector? It was clear that my co-researchers wanted to include me in the dialogic reflection, in these cases, it felt like they were facilitating and prompting me to reflect with them. Like in Whitmore's (1994) research, my self-disclosure help bridge my role as the researcher and the researched, as the facilitator and reflector in the group. In her work with oppressed groups, self-disclosure helped humanise her, such that her participants saw her "not as a fantasy" (Whitmore 1994, p. 94) and capable of mistakes. To a small extent, I felt this was happening in my research as well. Isabella noted the following about dialogic reflection,

You feel more human in a way when you discuss it, when you talk about things that you have done wrong or could do better ... it confirms your feelings are OK ... maybe it appeared that others are off being professional and amazing when if they were honest about it, they still have hang-ups or they were still worried about things. [Isabella in group two]

Building trust in dialogic reflection is about dropping barriers (Whitmore 1994) and revealing vulnerabilities. My co-researchers noted that there was often an assumption that they were the only ones who make mistakes and have had a hard time with practice. It is not until someone shares a negative experience or a difficulty when the "floodgates open" and they can have an honest discussion about their true experience.

Initially, everyone is very positive and then the first person says something negative about their placement, initially they tip toe around it a little bit ... "is anybody finding this difficult?" and then the floodgates open and they start discussing. But you need that because it is reassuring. [Sarah in group one]

The process of building truth is a chicken-or-the-egg dilemma:

For me to reveal myself to build this group world, I need to be able to trust the other members of the group, if I don't, I won't say anything. But then for the trust to be present, I need to reveal myself to start with. [Me in group one]

The thing is that I don't think you can trust each other if you don't bare a little bit of yourself. It is like with clients, they won't trust you unless you allow a little bit of yourself to come through, so, therefore, it is the same in any group dynamic. [Alicia in group two]

One needs to be able to trust the group before one can reveal one's vulnerabilities. However, to build that trust, one needs to be willing to be vulnerable enough for others to see one's world version. Both research groups felt that to solve this dilemma, some sort of structure may be helpful in providing a protected space that one may need to share one's vulnerabilities. Once there is a certain level of trust in the group, it snowballs as reflectors become more comfortable to share more with each other.

I think if you have a reflective bit, you might put out some stuff just to see what kind of response you get. If that is a group that you reflected with all the time, by the third time you do that in the group, you would somehow build up that kind of trust. [Isabella in group two]

9.4. Confidentiality and Protection

One way to build trust in dialogic reflection is ensuring confidentiality, such that dialogic reflectors are comfortable with sharing without thinking about the consequences of doing so. In this research, confidentiality was rehashed repeatedly. Confidentiality was stated in the participant information sheet, consent form, information session and at almost all the meeting sessions. Confidentiality was also in the list of group rules that both groups had set.

During the meetings I found myself repeating that the supervisors of this research would not see the transcripts of the meetings and if quotes were to be shared, they will not be identifiable. Occasionally I had repeated this because I could sense some reticence amongst the research

group members as they spoke about their experiences. This was often when the reflectors were reflecting on their university experiences where they voiced their thoughts on their lecturers.

When sharing their experiences, my co-researchers had been very aware of the confidentiality especially about the identity of their patients and educators. No identifiable information had been shared in the groups. There was a shared experience that was often the topic of discussion in the sessions. My co-researchers were rather frustrated about a student in their cohort who they felt was not pulling his or her weight and another student who was brash in the way he or she raised certain issues in their PBL groups. While their experiences with these two individuals were repeated often, my co-researchers were very careful to not let slip their names to me. In group two, they had decided to use the pseudonyms “Betty” and “Parsnip” when talking about these two individuals which led to some humorous exchanges when they started to confuse themselves with the pseudonyms. The following quotes are from separate reflections on the experience of working with these difficult individuals:

I am wondering if you have internalised anything from that interaction with that person. Have you picked up any sort of reflections on yourself and your own beliefs and what it means to be a good PBL member? [Me in group one]

Do you think that that person reflects? On how he or she affects the group? [Alicia in group two]

While confidentiality was important in dialogic reflection, I saw that the identity of the people in the reflection was not of great importance. The focus is on the self and how one understands the situation.

There were situations where the groups felt that it would be necessary to break confidentiality, with the permission of the group. These are situations where the group would have benefitted from some external aid. An example of such a scenario is when a member is extremely distraught and some counselling by a professional would be helpful. While this did not happen during the

research, both groups agreed that it would be useful to break confidentiality but only if the group agrees to it.

It also appears that in a group world, group members are protective of each other. I observed this when a lecturer made a remark about a co-researcher being too quiet in her PBL session. During the dialogic reflection session with me after that happened, all the group members leapt to defend that co-researcher. I also pointed out to both groups that I would not allow new members to join the group or anyone external to sit in, not only because of confidentiality but also because I felt responsible for protecting the co-researchers. This level of protection did concern me as I wondered if it could have limited the perspectives and the depth of reflection. Sarah responded,

I only see it as a positive because what we need to get out of it is personal reflection, I think it is a good thing that we are protective. [Sarah in group one]

Sarah saw that this protective environment was more important because of the need for democratic dialogue. Therefore, confidentiality generally superseded the value of any external input.

It would be interesting how outside that world, individual lecturers interpret, some might think that we are doing really well yet someone else might have a different opinion, like trying to understand the dynamics of that group world. [Eve in group one]

There was some value in having external input in the group world, however, some of us contended,

But do the opinions of an external person matter? Because we function as we want to, it is our reflection, so someone outside might say that we are not working properly, that we need to be more structured, but this works for us. [Me in group one]

I am quite protective, like for this group if someone were to come in and say, "we are re-jigging it, we are going to do this" and I would be "no, this is how we do it". [April in group one]

In a group world, I saw that we felt the need to protect the group world from external influences. This is also evident in the tone that some of us had used when discussing this, it was almost as though external input is treated as a form of critique on the group, something threatening to the group function rather than something constructive.

Confidentiality and protection are of great importance in the creation of a group world for they are prerequisites for democratic dialogue, a key principle of dialogic reflection. Confidentiality is not only about keeping the discussions within the group and protecting the identity of the group members. It is also about keeping the identity of the people they reflect on hidden. The key purpose of dialogic reflection is about understanding the experience hence the identities of the people in those experiences were not crucial. In a group world, members are protective of each other from those outside the groups and this is important for democratic dialogue to take place.

9.5. Inclusion, Exclusion, and Re-Inclusion

This protectionism also means that the group world can include and exclude members. The group world that is created is inclusive to the extent of the level of participation of each group member. In other words, if a member is reluctant to contribute his or her experience, then the group world would potentially be created while excluding that individual. Due to the protective characteristic of the group world, it is not easy to re-join the group world as this individual would be deemed as an external member. This section is a theoretical discussion that both groups had. There was no exclusion of any members during the group and all members were included in the group discussions throughout the research.

*You get out what you put in and at this level, we should be responsible and mature enough to know that if we don't say anything we are not going to get anything out of it.
[Isabella in group two]*

The group can go on without that person, so it is a personal issue I feel and it is to the detriment of them if they don't engage [Sophie in group two]

The group world that is created is only inclusive of those who contributed to creating it. Group members open themselves so that others can see a bit of their world version, but when someone is reluctant to do so, the others are not aware of how that person perceives the world or what he or she values. Thus, it is possible that the group world can be created can be exclusive of individuals who are not willing to participate in its creation.

I think it goes back to what we said about the trust, if you don't trust that person you are not going to be open to their ideas and vice versa, and maybe they are not sharing their ideas and you can't trust them. [Isabella in group two]

Maybe they are not including themselves in the group world so because we cannot see any of their worlds, they are not seeing any of ours either. [Sophie in group two]

The reluctance to share one's world version affects the degree of trust. When one does not trust the other members enough to share, then the other members would not trust one to include one in their group world.

Some co-researchers noted this exclusion is dependent on the individual and how he or she deals with the difficulties of opening up to the group. To a certain extent, it is a personal issue.

The group functions better if people bare themselves and try to understand other people. If that person is not understanding everyone else and they can't engage in the group because they can't contribute to the group world and they self-isolate themselves. [Alicia in group two]

Maybe they are trying to understand their own world, their position in the group and their actions. [Olivia in group two]

This suggested that the group world creation requires a degree of openness and also some awareness of one's world version and values. There needs to be a certain level of maturity and self-awareness to be able to participate effectively and constructively in the group world.

However, if the reluctance to participate is due to one's personality then perhaps dialogic reflection is not suitable for one.

Sometimes it is breaking through that to get comfortable but if you have got deeper issues about sharing stuff, like if you are a very private person and you have trouble expressing something like that in a group, maybe there is not a way of forcing that, maybe group reflections is not for you, if you can't get pass that. Some people will never feel comfortable. [Sarah in group one]

To re-include an excluded member, both research groups believe that it would be necessary to break the natural flow of the group world to allow it to be recreated again to include the excluded individual. Re-introducing structures such as that which was used in Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research can help this process. A degree of democratic dialogue would have to be sacrificed for this process of re-inclusion.

Perhaps if you allocated time so that everyone can get to speak as well. [Geri in group one]

I think that would be a good idea to allow a group to use a structure when reflecting without it being too structured, just to ensure that everyone has got a fair opportunity to contribute. [May in group one]

The allocated opportunity for individual contribution in Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research was thought to be inclusive and could be helpful in re-including an excluded member.

In the discussion about using a structure for re-inclusion, group one explored a passive method of participation where members pass around a written reflective piece to contribute to it anonymously. This was suggested to overcome the reticence about participating in a dialogic reflection. However, April noted that there would be an issue of ownership of the reflective contribution.

But then you don't take ownership of that with that paper if we talk about bringing in individual experiences ... how would you know that person has had an involvement in

creating this reflective world? I think they have to take ownership because that way you have an insight into what they are thinking. Perhaps anonymously doing it, it doesn't work. [April in group one]

I added to this point by noting that participating in a reflection in this way does not contribute to the creation of a group world because of the lack of ownership of one's participation.

Because you are not openly saying or reflecting, and you are doing it behind certain barriers or walls and you hide behind them. While protecting yourself, you are also hiding away from letting other people understand you, so in that sense, if you are passing a piece of paper around then you are not showing people your world and it doesn't create that group world then. [Me in group one]

Anonymous passive participation does little to contribute to the group world formation. Dialogue reflection is only dialogic insofar as the participants are taking part in the dialogue. Such participation necessarily requires one to take ownership of what they say and contribute to the dialogue. By doing so, the other members can understand the individual's world version. This would be crucial to building trust and creating the group world.

The group world creation is also inclusive because individuals that participate in creating it have a shared value and interest. This shared value, such as appreciating confidentiality in dialogic reflection, bring dialogic reflectors together. Isabella made the following observation about the dialogic reflection group sessions that we have conducted.

I think it also depends on what you value ... the people that have engaged in your research Ken, we all value reflecting, we come to this because we are interested in it, whereas there are several people in our cohort that haven't come to you, your groups. Maybe they do not see reflecting in a group as important to them, they don't see a point in it. [Isabella in group two]

Dialogic reflectors in my research were interested in reflection hence this brought the co-researchers together because of the motivation to collaboratively explore it. While this quote referred to this research, it also suggested that for a dialogic reflection to be successful, there

needs to be a shared purpose for that dialogic reflection. For example, for a dialogic reflective group on exploring creative teaching methods to be successful, participants in that group need to share an appreciation of the value of creative teaching methods. The group world builds on these shared values and interest and in the process, it also automatically excludes those who are not interested in it through their lack of participation in its creation.

9.6. Multiple Perspectives

Despite the shared interest and values, the main value of dialogic reflection is the multiple different perspectives that it offers. These multiple perspectives come from bringing together multiple world versions built from unique combinations of interests, values, and morals. This allows a reflector to explore his or her experience through different world versions hence enriching the reflection by many folds. While having multiple world versions may seem problematic, it is precisely the value of dialogic reflection. Dialogic reflection is not about achieving consensus, rather it is about gaining a better understanding of the experience which can only be achieved through accepting conflicting and differing perspectives.

The group world is extremely accommodating of differing world versions and thus it allows very broad analysis of an experience through the contributions of the other group members. Isabella described this as:

When we all met up after placement, we've all coming from lots of different areas, so it really broadens your thinking. Everyone had brought other experiences and different educators and different settings. [Isabella in group two]

I explained the value of multiple perspectives below:

We don't see all sides of the same thing, unfortunately, as much as you try to. You are limited to what know, value and our prior experiences which is why we need each other to reflect with us so you get multiple perspectives and you get a more holistic picture of the experience. [Me in group one]

Sophie noted the following after reflecting dialogically with the group:

I think I am seeing it more rationally and not so emotionally now. Because I have been through it now, it doesn't seem as scary as it was at that time ... I mean you look, your face looks absolutely horrified when I'm talking about it, but, I have been through it now, it didn't feel that it was that bad even though your face tells me it was. [Sophie in group two]

During her reflection, I noted that she was rather rational as she talked about her experience and what she had learned from it. However, this experience that she described was particularly emotional and distressing for the other members. This led to the members to react rather passionately in their analysis of the experience. Sophie, however, remained rather composed. In the above quote, she noted that the group members brought up an emotional dimension to her experience which she did not seem to be able to recall. The co-researchers below reflected on their contribution to this emotional dimension:

Because you were living the experience and you sort of knew you have to get on with it for placement sake, you sort of dulled down how inappropriate how an educator may have been, and I think we relived it back to you and say that it's not OK. I remember you saying, "hearing you say that now makes me realise it was not OK" and it was quite a brutal. [Olivia in group two]

I think after time passed after an event though you forget how bad or how powerful something is ... On placement, you were thinking "oh my god" but when reflecting with us you were like "I've got through it" but it took us to relive how bad it was for you. [Ava in group two]

The multiple perspectives in this case caused by the time at which the reflection was conducted. The reflector had been through the experience a while ago, reflected on it herself and came to certain conclusions of her own. When recounting this experience, she presented to the group a reflection on a distressing experience. In doing so, she had softened the emotional dimension of her reflection because it was already dealt with at that time. The other members, however, were listening to the experience for the first time. The emotional reaction to her experience

suggested some degree of role reversal where they started to see and feel the experience through the perspective of the reflector. As a result, this led to their powerful and passionate response in the dialogic reflection. The fact that Sophie previously said, "hearing you say that now makes me realise it was not OK", suggested that these emotional responses from the other reflectors had offered her a side of her own experience that she did not see.

Another cause of multiple perspectives in dialogic reflection is different morals and values that group members have. April noted the following when reflecting about a situation where a group member in her PBL module was repeatedly absent.

I don't find some things morally right ... or my values don't agree with something, it does come down to that and what people place more importance on. So, like not turning up and not telling anyone, to me I would not personally do that, it depends on your morals. If I did do what she did, I would have thought "how would that make other people feel", "how did could I have done this differently". I think morals and values have a lot of deal with it how people think about the same issue. [April in group one]

In response, I suggested that,

Perhaps our morals and values guide our reflections and ultimately drive us to take certain actions over others. [Me in group one]

Values and morals guide the creation of the world version and frame one's judgement of right and wrong. Hence, they would have an impact on how one reflects in the dialogic reflection.

One's wealth of experience is another reason for different perspectives,

There is a big age range between us sat here right now and even people doing their GCSE or their A levels have their way of reflecting. [Isabella in group two]

I think it can work both ways though you can have people who are really experienced but become quite narrow in their thinking and maybe they need this fresh set of eyes to make them think differently. Because the way you think is something created from years and years of practice. [Olivia in group two]

The co-researchers felt that as people reflect, they change their world versions as they learn and unlearn ideas. According to Dewey (1933), this process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction changes the way people reflect and think. The process of reflection is always evolving because the reflective process is often done in comparison to what one knows and have experienced prior (Schön 1983). Therefore, the same person may reflect differently at different ages. A dialogic reflective group of members from a range of ages, such as this research, would provide multiple perspectives partially because of this.

While dialogic reflections can cause conflict because of the multiple perspectives, we valued this conflict over consensus.

If you are saying each time you share, you share a little bit of your world I think it comes back to that fact that everyone is different ... you will never truly agree completely. [Eve in group one]

The sharing of one's world version through dialogic reflection ensures that each contribution is unique. Therefore, in this vein, the purpose of a facilitator in a dialogic reflection to play the devil's advocate to prevent group think, where the group members agree and reinforce each other, is perhaps redundant. This was pointed out by Sarah below:

I can see the purpose of the facilitator in that case, but you are always going to have views that are conflicting. I can see the danger especially if everybody agrees on everything and you just reinforce each other's ideas and nobody challenging you on anything and that is probably not healthy reflection. [Sarah in group one]

This further suggested that the role of the facilitator is perhaps rather limited in a dialogic reflection since group members may find it difficult to achieve group think. Group think is an issue in Co-operative Inquiry (Heron and Reason 2001) which led to Heron (1999) to stress the importance for the facilitator to play the role of the devil's advocate in the group. This is perhaps another way dialogic reflection differs from Co-operative Inquiry.

Tuckman (1965) theorised four developmental sequences for small groups:

1. Forming – Where the group orientates itself to the task, understanding the parameters within which it must work to complete the task.
2. Storming – Where group member expresses their individuality and resist the formation of a cohesive group
3. Norming – Where the group members accept each other for their unique qualities. The group achieves harmony.
4. Performing – Where the group becomes effective at problem-solving and group members take on specialist roles in the team when working towards the completion of the task.

It is, however, important to note that these group development sequences refer to task-oriented groups where problem-solving is the main purpose (Tuckman 1965), unlike dialogic reflection. Nonetheless, we found that Tuckman's (1965) work was useful in helping us conceptualise group worldmaking. In our dialogic reflections, April noted that:

Performing is lovely but if you want to reflect, you need to be able to take a little step back and talk about of difficult things. [April in group one]

I pointed out that,

I think there is a danger when you start norming because people start to think the same way ... then there is no point in having so many people reflecting. What we want to achieve here is to get as many multiple perspectives as possible. So, I think the best place to be is the storming, so we have people with different ideas, conflicting but that is fine because that is what we want. [Me in group one]

In dialogic reflection, the gathering of multiple world versions to create a group world ensures that consensus is hard to achieve because these multiple world versions differ in values, experiences, knowledge; they differ at very fundamental levels. Dialogic reflection requires

reflectors to share their own values and experiences with each other because of the nature of the enquiry requires such a level of intimacy. It is rare that reflectors would share completely identical world versions hence it is also rare for reflectors to think identically. The group world that forms in dialogic reflection is able to accommodate these multiple world versions because the purpose of dialogic reflection is not to arrive at a consensus or to collaborate on creating a common product such as a report or a presentation. Rather, it is about what the individual reflector takes away from the process of reflecting with others. The knowledge generated by the individual through this collaborative exploration of the experience is assimilated by the individual, informing, and transforming his or her understanding of the world, therefore, changing his or her world version.

9.7. Conclusion

According to Wang (Henke 1916) and Goodman (1978), individuals see the world in different ways. Hence, they have a perception of the world that may often be different from other people. Dialogic reflection, however, creates an environment where these world versions can meet, forming a group world. A group world is an arena where experience is shared and compared, and knowledge is generated and debated. It is not about achieving a collective agreement on something, rather it is about what each individual takes from the dialogic reflective process.

Group worldmaking is a delicate process that requires reflectors to bare themselves and trust each other to do so. Only through honest and democratic dialogue can reflectors create this group world. However, group worldmaking is an unforgiving process that punishes those who refuse or are reluctant to trust others or share their vulnerabilities. Re-entry into a formed group world is rather difficult due to the confidentiality and high level of protection. Re-inclusion would require the group world to be broken by introducing a structure which disrupts the natural flow in the group. In doing so, the structure invites all members to join in the remaking of the group world.

A group world is a safe environment for differing world versions to collide and transform each other through dialogic reflection. The multiple perspectives proffered by each world version helps provide the reflector with a multi-dimensional analysis of his or her experience. Knowledge elicited by the reflector during this process then informs his or her world version. Knowing from experience in dialogic reflection is supported and enriched by multiple perspectives of the world. Therefore, knowledge in dialogic reflection is created by a community of unique knowers and enquirers.

Chapter 10. The Art of Knowing from Experience Through Dialogue

The previous chapter discussed the different elements of dialogic reflection as a method of enquiry. This chapter furthers this argument by asserting that dialogic reflection is not only about enquiry into propositional knowledge about a subject matter. In fact, dialogic reflection is about understanding oneself and one's world version. Dialogic reflection goes beyond testing one's intellect, it also motivates one to question the emotional and moral dimensions of one's experience. Therefore, dialogic reflection is about appreciating the interaction between these different dimensions of one's experience. These different dimensions of one's experience influence and inform each other.

This chapter starts with a discussion about the nature of experience and its artistic nature. As a way of knowing from experience, dialogic reflection appreciates this artistic nature of experience and thus, is an artistic way of knowing. Dialogic reflection for moral and emotional knowing is explored in this chapter to further add weight to this argument. Since dialogic reflection is about knowing and understanding one's experience, it is a natural form of enquiry about the world. However, it is made esoteric by theorists and its application in the professional setting.

10.1. Experience as Art

The final argument for dialogic reflection to be considered as an epistemology is the fact that dialogic reflection is an artistic way of knowing about the world through one's experience of it. This argument is built on Dewey's (1934) work on the artistic nature of experience. Experience is more than an itinerary of happenings, it is a mixture of intellect, actions, emotions, and morals

that influence each other. While there are many dimensions to an experience, they are ill-defined because of how closely they relate to each other. Experience, therefore, must be understood as a whole, and not treated as a sum of these dimensions (Dewey 1934).

Dewey (1934) believed in the artistic and fluid nature of experience. To have an experience, one has to allow the material experienced to have completed its course (Dewey 1934). In this sense, the experience is whole and has its own individual quality. Dewey (1934) believed that we experience life in its various episodes of activity. However, each individual episode flows freely from one to the other, without pauses or blanks.

In experience, flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself. (Dewey 1934, p. 36)

This leads to Dewey's (1934) argument that experience is artistic. In a piece of art, different objects and scenes blend into unity, however, each still holding on their individual character. Similarly, these various episodes of activity flow into each other in succession however, they still retain their distinct individual characteristics. That is what that makes the experience unique to the individual due to the distinct nature of these episodes such as what the individual is thinking and feeling as he or she walks the patient to the bed or how the individual has observed the patient behaved throughout this activity. This experience inherently belongs to the individual who is experiencing, and all thoughts, feelings and observation are from the perspective of the individual.

Each experience is unique in its own emotional, practical, and intellectual components. However, Dewey (1934) believed that these components are not separate or independent of each other. They are in fact "subtle shadings of a pervading and developing hue" (Dewey 1934, p. 37). The components fade in and out of each other; emotion, the activity and intellect do not exist in isolation. One cannot feel angry without something to be angry about; similarly, one

cannot have any thoughts not tied to an activity or emotion. The emotions, activity and intellectual components make up the individual episodes which are the constituent parts of the entire experience. In parallel, the colour, paint quality and brushstrokes make up the objects or scenes which blend harmoniously to make up the painting. Hence, experience has an artistic quality (Dewey 1934).

Reflection can be viewed as a sequential examination of the individual qualities of an experience (Gibbs 1988). Gibbs (1988) proposed that the reflective process should be used as a more elaborate way of debriefing after an experience. In his model, he urged the user to consider his or her feelings especially when reflecting as this is often neglected and to follow the steps that he had outlined in the cycle procedurally. His reflective cycle included the following processes and some instructions for each process.



Figure 4. Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle

With reference to figure four,

1. Description – Describe what happened, however, do not make attempt to judge or make conclusions.

2. Feelings – Note the reactions and feelings, however, do not analyse them yet.
3. Evaluation – Make judgements on the good and bad aspects of the experience.
4. Analysis – Utilising ideas outside the experience, make sense of the situation
5. Conclusions (general) – Draw general conclusions from the analysis
6. Conclusions (specific) – Draw specific conclusions on your unique and personal way of working.
7. Personal Action Plans – Show how the situation can be approached differently in the future. This loops back to a new experience and then leads to another cycle of reflection.

Gibbs (1988) warned the user to not make judgements prematurely and to move logically from one step to the next. He believed that the practical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of an experience can be isolated from each other in the Description, Feelings, Evaluation and Analysis steps respectively (Gibbs 1988).

However, from Dewey's (1934) concept of experience, it could be concluded that it is futile to examine the emotional, practical, and intellectual component of an experience in isolation for they exist because of each other. In other words, experience must be examined as a whole and not its constituent parts.

Dewey's (1934) concept of experience was built on James' (1912) radical empirical view of the universe. James believed that everything, whether objective (physical) or subjective (mental) matter, is made of a single primal material he calls pure experience. They are immersed in "the great continua of time, space and the self" and all "flow together without interfering" (James 1912, p. 94). Therefore, everything, even though it can exist in parts, is conjunct, continuous and in constant flux and flow (Kolb 2014). This was echoed in Dewey's (1934) work. However, James (1912) adopts a differing view on reflection.

Experience in its immediacy seems perfectly fluent ... When the reflective intellect gets to work, however, it discovers incomprehensibilities in the flowing process. Distinguishing its elements and parts, it gives them separate names, and what it thus disjoins it cannot easily put together. (James 1912, p. 92)

Conjunctive transitions are the most superficial of appearances, illusions of our sensibility which philosophical reflection pulverises at a touch. (James 1912, p. 70)

To James (1912), reflection abhors the flow and continuity of the experience. It intellectualises the difficulties of the experience by dissecting and compartmentalising elements of the experiences, hence rendering the experience disjointed. Reflection severs pure experiences from the flow of time, space and self for intellectual analysis; in doing so, the reflective product makes little sense because they no longer flow like before.

Hence it was concluded from his argument that because experience is all-encompassing and flows continuously, it should be treated as a whole and not taken apart or intellectualised out of its context of time, space and self, i.e. the artistic nature of experience needs to be appreciated. This is similar to the conclusion that can be drawn from Dewey's (1934) concept of experience.

10.2. Artistry in Dialogic Reflection

Dialogic reflection is a way of knowing from experience. Since experience has an artistic quality, then dialogic reflection, by association, is an artistic way of knowing. Aside from exploring the intellectual aspects of the experience, dialogic reflection also explores emotional and moral dimension.

10.2.1. Dialogic Reflection for Moral Knowing

Dialogic reflection pushes one to explore one's morals as one questions one's experience. In this research, my co-researchers had occasionally verbalised this process.

Like not turning up and not telling anyone, to me I would not personally do that, it depends on your morals like if I did do that how did that make other people feel, how did I make other people feel differently? [April in group one]

In this instance, April was reflecting using the role reversal method as described in Chapter Eight. In her reflection on a PBL group member who was constantly absent without notice, she explored how she would have behaved differently if she was that group member. She also identified that this potential difference in behaviour would be related to the difference in their moral values.

How do you frame morality of the profession so that everybody is fully aware of the morality of what they should be doing? When they reflect, it would be like "I have done something wrong". It has to have that frame of reference doesn't it. [Alicia in group two]

Alicia explored the need for the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (COT 2015) as frame of reference for practitioners. She described the code as moral values of the profession and it is important for ethical practice. She also discussed how this set of professional moral values can be different from personal moral values and it should supersede the latter when it comes to practice.

The above examples show some ways we had conducted this moral exploration of their experience in practice and in the university. This moral exploration follows the same analysis methods as described Chapter Six. Role reversal and comparison methods of analysis are demonstrated in the examples above.

Moral exploration of an experience is not always considered in theories of reflection. Gibbs' (1988) cycle of reflection does not explicitly state any moral consideration in its analysis and evaluation. Johns' (2013) model for structured reflection does prompt the reflector to explore the congruency between the actions in one's experience and one's values. The moral exploration is insinuated by the exploration of values but not explicitly prompted.

Fish's and de Cossart's (2007) work on The Invisibles of practice, conversely, is a theory of reflection built around morality and moral practice. In response to the Technical Rational school of thought in the practice environment, Fish and de Cossart (2007) sought to counter it with the moral mode of practice. Fish (2012) argued that practitioners when operating in the technical mode view practice as episodic, merely requiring a combination of knowledge and skills. Drawing on Carr (2004), Fish (2012) noted that a profession can become prescriptive, being a professional becomes a matter of checking off a checklist of skills and knowledge, in other words, tools of practice. Professionals become technicians and professional effectiveness is measured by their range of skills (Carr 2004; Fish 2012).

Such practitioners are in fact not in control of their own practice but merely agents of practice as set down by others. They are obedient to convention and do not engage in critiquing it (Fish 2012, p. 43).

Practising with such a mindset implies that reflection carried out is not critical of the conventions of practice. This corroborated with Gilbert's (2001) critique of practitioners of reflective practice being uncritical of the practice traditions of the setting or profession, hence becoming agents or mouthpieces of the professional body who carry out their agenda without being clear of how it applies to their practice.

Fish and de Cossart (2007) introduced the moral mode of practice as the antithesis to Technical Rationality. In contrast, the moral mode of practice, through appealing to the practitioner's moral sense, encourages practitioners to become their own agents. This transcends the personal and social agenda; in carrying out morally right practice, practitioners acquire virtues which become the rewards of the moral mode of practice themselves. Gilbert (2001) on the other hand viewed this as a moral regulation of professional practice however it was hard to find fault in this approach to practice. Occupational therapy is an ethical profession; in fact, as professional practice is about helping other achieve a good life (Dige 2009), ethics and morality serve as the boundary, guarding moral practice against hedonistic practice. While Gilbert (2001) painted this

moral regulation as conspiratorial, the thought of an unethical, an amoral profession is far more terrifying than one that is bounded by its moral duty to society. Society, in consideration of the knowledge that professions possess, expect professionals to submit to a higher code of conduct (Beauchamp and Childress 2001) and perhaps this should extend to an even higher ethical standard. Johns and McCormack (1998) defined an effective professional in accordance with his/her ability to self-monitor his practice thereby ensuring his/her efficacy in practice. Fish and de Cossart (2007), via the moral duty of the practitioner, sought to encourage the practitioner to take on the responsibility to better their practice and to become more effective practitioners. To train reflective moral practitioners (Ferrell 1998), Fish and de Cossart (2007) developed *The Invisibles*.

The Invisibles referred to the “deeper characteristics of professional practice as enacted by a practitioner recognised widely as a wise clinician” (Fish 2012, p. 44). In contrast to *Strands of Reflection* discussed in Chapter Seven, *The Invisibles* was designed to encourage rigorous reflection about the practitioner in practice. It brought into question the integrity and wisdom of the practitioner’s thought process and their clinical judgements and reasoning (de Cossart and Fish 2005; Fish and de Cossart 2007; Fish 2012). This opposed the technical mode of practice and directed the professional to a more reflective and moral mode of practice.

Wareing (2017) similarly developed a valued-based model of reflection for use in healthcare settings. He argued for a need for models of reflection to be value-based because of the need for practice to be well reasoned, clinically, and ethically. Practice in healthcare is inherently value driven and these values are manifested in a practitioner’s decisions and actions (Cody 2006). Therefore, the examination of practice experience will unavoidably be value-laden (Wareing 2017). Wareing (2017) argued that values are built on morals, experience, religion, education, and social background thus, his model of reflection was focused on exploring the experience and its relationship with these faculties of the reflector. In his model, he prompted the reflector to

consider his or her own values as a person, the impact of these values on others in the experience and what other values needed to be explored to better his or her practice (Wareing 2017).

10.2.1.1. Dark Reflections

While reflection explores morality, it does not always lead to moral goodness. This was an interesting theoretical discussion that we had in both groups, no dark reflections were raised as part of the reflective process.

I posed the following questions to both research groups,

Is reflection always good? Does it mean always aspiring to be a better person? Is reflection always for a more ethical practice? [Me in group one]

Both groups rejected the notion that reflection is always about being morally good. Two co-researchers explained,

Reflection can be looking at something wrong and justifying to yourself for all sorts of reasons and continue to do it [Sarah in group one]

You can reflect on something really bad and think of worse ways to do it ... you could think "I left a fingerprint that time, I would get caught. I will wear gloves next time." [April in group one]

This idea that even thieves reflect is what I refer to in this thesis as dark reflection. Both groups agreed that reflection, despite being a moral exploration, is separate from moral righteousness. In the above context, the co-researchers were referring to monological reflections, where the reflector reflects on his or her own.

Dark reflections, though can be considered evil, are perhaps still true to the world version that reflector has. As world versions are constructed based on moral principles, it is perhaps the moral principles upon which these world versions are built upon that are evil rather than the reflection itself. A dark reflection is perhaps considered morally sound to the reflectors because

it is congruent to morals as applied in the reflector's world version. Therefore, the dark reflection is not evil but the morals and world version of that reflector are.

Because reflection is so subjective our reflections are skewed according to what we know and what we value so there is a need for us to reflect in group, in fact it is important for us to reflect in groups because we morally check each other. [Me in group one]

They might not be intentionally do it, when we talked about somebody reflects and then when they talk to other people, they consider other aspects they have not before, maybe that is what happens maybe they are reflecting, they don't talk to anyone else they can't see what they have done and the way they have been reflecting to themselves, it seems like it is alright. [Sophie in group two]

Dialogic reflection is more beneficial than monologic reflections because of the ability to morally check against other reflectors. When reflecting monologically, dark reflections are not identified as evil because the reflection remains in the same world version, built on the same poorly constructed morals. However, dialogic reflection is an arena where multiple world versions come together and reflectors can question each other on all aspects of the experience. Dark reflections become easier to identify because of the dialogic aspect of dialogic reflection and the degree of exposure the reflectors need to exhibit.

"Moral catastrophes" (Roberts and Ion 2014, p. 673) that happened in Stafford and Winterbourne view hospitals have been attributed to habitual thoughtlessness and a lack of reflection (Wareing 2017). In the case of the Nazi regime, Arendt (1971, p. 417) argued that evil was a result of a "curious, quite authentic inability to think" critically about one's actions, and not always a result of malice and acrimony. Dialogic reflection however argues the reverse. Reflection cannot guard against evil intent and actions because reflection is not always righteous. The moral quality is dependent on one's world version and dark reflections can be considered acceptable because they are morally congruent to one's immoral construction of one's world version. It is the world version that is evil. However dialogic reflection can help

identify dark reflections because they are being questioned and judged by other reflectors with different moral constructions. It is perhaps not thoughtlessness that causes evil as Arendt (1971), Roberts and Ion (2014) and Wareing (2017) have argued. Rather it is dark world perspectives that have been left morally unchecked. Dialogic reflection is, therefore, perhaps a better way to guard against unethical practices.

10.2.2. Dialogic Reflection for Emotional Knowing

The crux of the issue with reflection lies in the epistemic differences as discussed in Chapter Seven. One of the problems as discussed was a hyper-rational version of reflection where the focus of reflection is on the objective reporting of the experience. This results in the reduction of the experience to a single dimension, trimming away the other potentially rich sources of learning found in the other aspects of the experience. Dialogic reflection however reopens the reflector's mind to these other dimensions because of how other reflectors interpret the process of reflection.

Group worldmaking, while bringing together different world versions, also gathers reflectors who perceive reflection in their own disparate ways. Reflectors through the different methods of analysis identified in Chapter Eight question and prompt each other to explore the different dimensions of the experience. Aside from being a moral exploration, dialogic reflection is also a process of emotional exploration.

In Chapter Nine, I discussed an example where Sophie, having reflected on an incident that passed a while ago, assumed a more rational composure. This cool-headedness was challenged when other reflectors in the group reminded her of the emotions that she had felt in the experience. With time, it appeared that this reflector had forgotten these emotions she had felt then but after reflecting with the group she was reminded that the way her educator had treated her "was not OK". This suggested that after her initial reflection on her experience, she had come

to accept the way her educator had treated her. She reflected on having heard what the other reflectors had pointed out:

I don't know, I feel a little differently now. I did not see that, at that time it was a lot for me. Actually, at some point, especially towards the end because it turned out well, I didn't feel that she was as harsh as perhaps she was I think that it prepared me for the next placement definitely. I think that you have to try to do the best that they want you to do and its hard to find your own way through that. [Sophie in group two]

On reflecting again, Sophie had elicited a few positive points on her particularly difficult experience. The value of dialogic reflection here lies in the opportunity to look at an emotive experience calmly. While the cool-headedness is from having distanced oneself from the experience, the emotional dimension is not lost as it is once again brought up by the other reflectors. Doing so allows one to draw important understanding about the experience which one may not be able to previously. In Chapter Seven, reflection was described as a painful process that sometimes encourages one to look at experience in a negative light rather than to approach it with optimism. Dialogic reflection offers the reflector to revisit an experience but this time with more clarity and positivity.

Other co-researchers have noted similarly about their dialogic reflections:

From other people's reactions, you either feel better about it or you realise "no, that's definitely a problem"... I did a reflection on it ... and then I felt better about it. [Isabella in group two]

Isabella noted that she felt that there were times when she was aware of a certain discomfort in how she felt about some of her experiences. However, it was after she reflected with others when she was more aware of what this discomforting feeling was in her experience which then triggered her to conduct a reflection on it.

I've reflected on something from the last placement with some friends and actually I was down playing it and they were like "that's terrible!" When I started to think about it, "actually it was quite horrible isn't it?" [Alicia in group two]

This co-researcher noted that it took other reflectors to make her realise the gravity of her experience. The above examples showed that dialogic reflection transported the reflector back to the experience, stirring up the emotional dimension that was often forgotten, “downplayed” [Alicia in group two] or “dulled down” [Olivia in group two]. This allowed the reflector to revisit this emotional dimension and elicit new understanding that he or she might not have been able to at that time.

This new understanding generated from the emotional exploration of the experience was particularly useful in the way Olivia had understood the nature of practice:

I think I have learnt that it is ok to admit that you had a bad placement and you felt like crap. After the first placement we all probably felt that we quite liked it, I don't know if that was because we were quite naive, we would come back on Fridays sharing and all quite excited and I think I feel like I had to keep up with all of them. But now I am admitting that I don't like the placement and that's fine. It doesn't mean that I don't want to be an occupational therapist, but that is just not what I where I want to work. I think my last placement has made me be honest to be myself and tell everyone else, I don't hide if it has not been great then. I think it had a knock-on effect on my attitude towards this year. [Olivia in group two]

Olivia explained how she had changed her perspective of a bad experience in practice. Initially she felt the need to tip-toe around the issue, only talking about how great her experience on placement was. But after reflecting with others, she had realised that she did not have to keep up the façade as it was common for someone to feel unhappy about his or her placement. Beyond this acceptance, Olivia had also learned to embrace her experience for what it was and started to be more honest about it. This then made her more positive about her course and practice.

The following dialogue between two co-researchers depicts this process of emotional exploration and how a negative experience can be made positive through dialogic reflection. In this example, the co-researchers in group one were reflecting on the experience where they had a PBL group member who was not contributing to the group, resulting in some frustration.

It is kind of frustrating for you guys because it was an issue about one person and it wasn't that we were working better than you guys. It wasn't that we had some magical thing it was because you had just that one person and ... if you swapped that one person into our group we would be the ones with the issues so it is just normal. [Sarah in group one]

I think it is really sad how one person can impact so much, I had been with that person the entire time and I think it had really impacted my university experience and makes it really negative ... I do have to internalise it and think how I could have done things differently. [Karen in group one]

You know what we often lose sight of? We get so caught up with one person and I think like from the very start of this course I found everyone is very dedicated ... it felt different and felt like everybody knew why they were here, what they want to do and I have been inspired by that ... I am a little bit of a slacker but I don't want to let people down... when I know other people are counting on me, I will do it. PBL is part of it and all those different personalities are part of it. [Sarah in group one]

Sarah provided some comfort to Karen, who described her experience with this particular PBL group member. Sarah acknowledged her frustration and elaborated that it was natural to feel that way as the problem perhaps lay in that particular group member rather than in Karen. This led to Karen to look back at how her feelings about this experience had affected her wider experience of the course, recognising that there was need to accept the experience and proceed beyond her frustration about it. Sarah then assumed the role of the reflector to reflect on how her obsession with one group member had clouded her perception of the other students on the cohort. Recognising that she had been distracted, she saw with greater clarity how inspirational the other students were in juxtaposition. She went on to describe how the other students had

motivated her in her studies. At the end of her reflection, she returned to her experience with that group member and accepted the experience along with the fact that it was this acceptance that had led her to this new realisation in her reflection.

10.2.2.1. The Motivation for Dialogic Reflection

Dialogic reflection is not only an emotional exploration because it brings up the emotional dimension the experience. It is a process of reflection that is driven by empathy and compassion for each other in the dialogic reflective group. Therefore, dialogic reflection itself is emotionally motivated.

For the reflector, dialogic reflection can be rather emotionally liberating:

I felt that it was very cathartic. There were so many things I could not have said to my supervisor nor could I have written it down in a reflection, knowing that she would look at them. [Me in group two]

Group reflection is quite helpful because I remember you and [another student on the course] outside the placement. She like off loaded onto you and it was useful to share experiences because ... you feel better about it after. [Isabella in group two]

For the other reflectors, their motivation for dialogic reflection is driven by the need to support each other.

Perhaps we were doing it as a form of support and we are showing interest by asking further questions, we are showing that we are listening and supporting them. [April in group one]

This support through dialogic reflection was particularly useful in role-emerging placements where the role of the occupational therapist in the setting is not clearly identified. Students on these placements are not always supported by an occupational therapist at that setting, in some cases their educators are lecturers who provide supervision but are not based in that setting. Students may feel lonely and detached in these placements.

They were travelling home together so they were constantly reflecting in the car about their days and what they potentially could do and what they were learning it was vital in that setting because we had no other support. [Alicia in group two]

Because dialogic reflectors want to show their support for each other, the process of reflection itself is emotionally charged and empathetic.

That is what you do when you empathise isn't it, where you put yourself in that situation and think how you would feel. You are right it is pulling it away from their perspective, you are not trying to get into their heads you are trying to put yourself in the experience, I think that is something that we do instinctively. [Sarah in group one]

The analytical process of reflection is not about trying to see what the reflector sees, but about embodying the someone else's experience and understanding what one might feel in that scenario. Understanding what the reflectors feels hence naturally becomes part of this process. Dialogic reflection is a process that requires a great degree of intimacy and it is perhaps not suitable or as effective for a group of strangers.

We are friends we are all on the same course, same level of development ... we want to support our colleague and help each other feel better. If we were all strangers, it might be quite different, if we were to come to a group reflection for the first time. [Isabella in group two]

Lea below expressed the same point when talking to Sophie who reflected on her bad experience with her educator.

Other people may not have been as passionate as we were. We are your friends and we really wanted to help you, we have put our guard down. We would not have if we didn't know you or it would have taken a lot to get to that stage. But here, immediately we were there for you! [Lea in group two]

Because dialogic reflection is an emotional process, it is perhaps not something that can be done easily amongst a group of people. There are many factors that come into play in dialogic reflection such as trust, democratic dialogue, power dynamics and multiple perspectives. It is

more than about getting the right number of people in a group. There is a strong human aspect to dialogic reflection and getting the right people in the group is more important and perhaps the hardest task of all. This goes on to suggest that dialogic reflection is not a deliberate process. While dialogic reflection is rich and immensely useful in developing one's understanding of the world, it is not something that can be forced or used instrumentally. The human aspect supersedes any organisational or logistical considerations, in other words, it is not about setting aside time and a venue for dialogic reflection to take place. Reflectors must first know each other and care for each other for the dialogic reflection to be effective. This is further expanded upon in Part Four of this thesis which discusses the implementation of dialogic reflection as an epistemology in education and professional settings.

10.3. Dialogic Reflection as Natural Enquiry About the World

Dialogic reflection appreciates the multiple dimensions of experience. It was established earlier in the thesis that it is a method of enquiry that features the experience as the key source of knowledge, exploring the intellectual, emotional, moral, practical aspects of it. While it is a powerful method of enquiry, it is not something that can be forced. Fostering democratic dialogue is tricky and when forcibly used, it results in the confusions and difficulties as raised in Chapter Seven.

The previous chapters of this thesis have hinted at the idea that dialogic reflection is a natural enquiry about the world. In Chapter Six, I have discussed the key principles behind dialogic reflection. While democratic dialogue is key in dialogic reflection, it is not something that can be achieved through deliberate methods, such as a rigid structure as in Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research. Reflectors in a dialogic reflection should be respected for their knowledge and experience that they bring, knowledge in dialogic reflection is generated with reference to these prior knowledge and experience. In Chapter Eight, it was noted that while structures and

facilitators can be helpful, they serve very little purpose in a dialogic reflection. Structures disrupt the natural flow of conversation and affects the degree of democratic dialogue. The facilitator is not a necessary role as the group is capable of self-regulating. In Chapter Nine, it was discussed that the group world that forms in dialogic reflection is a space where reflectors can question each other about their experiences. The purpose of this is not to test the reflector or to prove one's knowledge but to construct one's knowledge of the world and to understand how other reflectors perceive it. In this chapter, dialogic reflection appreciates the experience as a whole, its intellectual, emotional, moral, practical aspects. The impetus to reflect dialogically is from the desire to support and help other dialogic reflectors. This research had revealed a rejection of dialogic reflection as a deliberate action, rather it is a process that is part of everyday life as reflectors experience the world and try to understand these experiences.

In this research, reflection and dialogic reflection were noted to be something that one does as a part of everyday life and not only part of professional practice. Dialogic reflection was occasionally confused with over thinking and worrying.

I think I am reflective but I am not sure if that is a good thing sometimes I play stuff over and over again and that can lead to anxiety. [Sarah in group one]

We all have the ability to worry about what we have done, should I have done that or is there something else I could have done in that situation. That's reflective isn't? [May in group one]

That's because I'm a woman, but I like to you know getting that, bouncing ideas from people, verbally talking it through, as well as like constructively writing. [Isabella in group two]

The co-researchers also described their dialogic reflective process with their family members on personal life experiences as well. This suggested that reflection and dialogic reflection are perhaps not just about understanding professional practice experiences. Part of the reason the process of reflection is nebulous is because of Schön's (1987) work. He noted reflection to be

same process as how a jazz musician knows what notes to play or how a baseball player knows how to pitch the ball during a match. He referred to daily conversations as a process of reflection-in-action as one listens to the dialogue and reacts to it (Schön 1987). While other some theorists have written about reflection as used in professional practice (Johns 2013; de Cossart and Fish 2005; Fish et al. 1991), other writers about reflection have looked at it as a more natural form of enquiry about the world, as a philosophical idea. Plato wrote about understanding from experience to learn about the truths of the world (Jowett 1980); Locke (1690) understood reflection as the internal process which allows us to understand the sensations we experience from interacting with the world; Dewey (1933) saw reflection as a better way of thinking.

Some co-researchers also felt that reflection and dialogic reflection were made esoteric by the theories and the profession.

I am not sure if I have met anyone who have said "a model really made me become a reflective practitioner". [Sarah in group one]

I know we all do it naturally anyway but someone said at the beginning of the course "you have to be a reflective practitioner, you have to put reflection in your CPD" ... it can be quite a scary concept. [Nicola in group one]

Theories about reflection were often disregarded in the reflective process. The co-researchers noted that reflection was a natural part of their everyday activities, a few noted that it was something they did when driving home. It was not an academic process of applying models and referring theorists. Ava from group two mentioned that her educator told her “models are a load of nonsense” when she was on placement. There is a rejection of the use of models in the reflective process, however, they can be useful for those who find reflection to be difficult:

I think the theories are there for guidance for people who find reflection difficult ... if you're a naturally reflective person, then perhaps those theories are not necessary, how I think of them is like they are tools. [Nicola in group one]

Nicola looked at theories of reflection instrumentally however this was because she felt that reflection is a natural process. These theories serve as guidance rather than direction for the reflector.

Because reflection and dialogic reflection was seen as a natural process, the following co-researchers feel that the way reflection is encouraged in education and practice seems to be rather deliberate.

I have always said that I feel reflection is quite natural ... when on placement we have to do a written reflection for evidence, I go on and naturally reflect on this and something it just feels like a tick box exercise because we are already naturally reflective. [April in group one]

I know we all do it naturally anyway but when someone at the beginning of the course "you have to be a reflective practitioner, you have to put reflection in your CPD" ... it can be quite a scary concept. [Nicola in group one]

The reflection as for the educator and it was not for me. I don't get anything from writing it, it is only proof. [Alicia in group two]

Reflection for evidence appears to be a redundant exercise when it is a something one naturally does. The second co-researcher notes that when the profession encourages reflection through reflective practice and CPD, it created some apprehension about something that was already naturally occurring. April recounted:

My last educator said, "why don't you do one reflection every week". But I said, "if I have got nothing to reflect on, then I don't see the point", and she agreed with me in the end. It took me quite a lot of guts to be able to say that. [April in group one]

The members from both groups agree that they are naturally reflective individuals:

I don't think you can be completely switched off, some are more reflective than other but you cannot completely be unreflective. [April in group one]

I reflect in my mind all the time on everything, everyday all the time and I only write it down because I have to. [Alicia in group two]

Additionally, reflection was also thought to be part of life and survival:

I think it is natural to do it, you have got to do it. I don't see how you can survive in the world without it ... you will just be constantly be running into walls because you don't register that it is wrong. [Me in group one]

It would be risky if you don't reflect on things at all because if you keep going through the same process, you put yourself at risk of losing everything. [Karen in group one]

As dialogic reflection is driven by empathy, the desire to contribute to the analysis is altruistic and at times, an unconscious process of taking part in natural dialogue:

We weren't consciously trying to take the experience apart nor were we thinking that "I need to help her analyse it" I don't think it was conscious on our part with the questions. [Me in group one]

It was the desire to support other reflectors that drove the dialogic reflection rather a deliberate need to get something out of the reflection. This suggested that dialogic reflection is natural because it is like taking part in a dialogue with someone. Issacs (1993) described dialogue as:

... a movement towards creating a field of genuine meaning and inquiry where people can allow a free flow of meaning and vigorous exploration of the collective background of their thought, their personal predispositions, the nature of their shared attention and the rigid features of their individual and collective assumptions. (Issacs 1993, p. 23)

Dialogue itself can be reflective because reflectors explore world versions, experience and knowledge, both individually and collectively. This exploration is part of natural interactions between humans. Dialogue is an individual and collective endeavour to understand the world. It is not applied as a unique skill that belongs to certain professions. It is inherent in one's everyday life, at work, with one's family and friends.

10.4. Conclusion

Experience is multi-dimensional. The intellectual, emotional, practical, moral aspects of an experience are closely related to each other and influence each other. However, they still each hold distinctive qualities, much like elements in a work of art. This gives experience its artistic quality. Dialogic reflection appreciates this artistic quality of experience by looking at experience as a whole. When reflection is viewed from a specific epistemic stance as discussed in Chapter Four, reflection and experience lose their artistic quality as they are not appreciated as a whole and reduces reflection and experience to a singular dimension. A re-conception of reflection and dialogic reflection is therefore necessary.

Apart from being a method of enquiry, dialogic reflection is also an exploration of morality and emotions. The moral exploration of experiences is important for occupational therapy as an ethical profession. Dialogic reflection provides a space for reflectors to morally check themselves and hence it is perhaps a more effective way to ensure ethical practice in occupational therapy. Dialogic reflection motivates reflectors to explore the emotional dimension of the experience which can be often forgotten over time. This emotional exploration allows reflectors to explore their emotions while having distanced themselves from them, often resulting in a reflection that is clearer and more positive. Dialogic reflection itself is an emotionally driven process. Reflectors engage in it, galvanised by their desire to support each other, express their feelings and help each other. It is more than an intellectual pursuit.

Dialogic reflection is deeply motivated by empathy. It appreciates the natural flow of dialogue and thrives in a democratic environment and one that lacks structure. It is something that one engages in as part of everyday life and everyone can reflect dialogically. It is a natural process that had been made esoteric and contrived by theorists and professional bodies. This chapter concludes that dialogic reflection is an art and way of life. The next chapter summarises the

findings and discussions of this research and presents dialogic reflection as an epistemology by its own right.

Chapter 11. Dialogic Reflection as an Epistemology

The five chapters preceding this have laid out four arguments for dialogic reflection to be reconceptualised as more than a learning method or a way of proving growth or a way of assuring ethical practice.

Chapter Seven discussed the major issues in the practice of reflection when done monologically and when done with someone else. Reflection, when practised and taught, can be rather confusing because of how nebulous the process is. Educators sometimes add to this confusion by teaching and guiding reflection from different epistemic stances. Reflection is also a process that demands one to be vulnerable. When done dialogically, it requires the reflector to lay bare and open up himself or herself for scrutiny. This thus makes dialogic reflection difficult in the presence of an educator who may sit in judgement of the reflector. Some of the issues regarding reflection and dialogic reflection stemmed from the most fundamental question “what exactly is reflection?” Therefore, this suggested that there was a need to conceptualise reflection and dialogic reflection at the epistemic level.

Chapter Six and Eight discussed dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry. In this discussion, I have elicited three key principles of dialogic reflection: mediating theory and practice through context, democratic dialogue, and reflectors as unique individuals. These three key principles guide the dialogic reflection as an approach to enquiry. Chapter Eight expanded on this by exploring the practical considerations for conducting a dialogic reflection. Dialogic reflection as a method of enquiry embraces natural, unstructured, unregulated dialogue. However, this is not so to say that dialogic reflection is a casual conversation. It is a deep collaborative exploration of experiences that features unique methods of analysis.

Chapter Nine focused on the dialogue reflection as a communal approach to developing knowledge about the world. It demonstrated that dialogic reflection is a platform where reflectors can share their world perspectives. Dialogic reflection itself is a safe yet open environment where reflectors can question and prompt each other and offer their analysis and understanding of the world. These multiple perspectives give dialogic reflection its breadth as a way of developing knowledge from experience. However dialogic reflection is not about achieving agreement, rather it is making use of the dialogic reflective environment to develop one's individual understanding and knowledge of the world.

Chapter Ten discussed dialogic reflection as a method of exploring experience. Dialogic reflection embraces the artistry of experience by offering deep analysis of the intellectual, moral, and emotional aspects of the experience. It is a method of self-discovery through understanding how one interacts with the world. Because of the different perspectives offered in dialogic reflection, it does not take a specific epistemic stance where an aspect of the experience or reflective process is favoured. It is a holistic and an artistic way of knowing.

From the four lines of arguments in the previous chapters, it was concluded that dialogic reflection does not belong completely to a single epistemology. It stands strong on its own, rooted in its three key principles, offering one a way of knowing through experience that has incredible depth and breadth. While it is something that can be conducted practically as a method of enquiry, it would be reductive to limit its use to just improving practice. Rather it should be recognised in its full potential, as a way of knowing about the world. Dialogic reflection is an epistemology by its own right.

This chapter discusses dialogic reflection as an epistemology and presents a taxonomy of dialogic reflection and discusses how existing theories of reflection can help assist in understanding this epistemology. In Appendix L, I expand on dialogic reflection as a philosophical concept by juxtaposing it with experientialism and constructivism.

11.1. Defining Dialogic Reflection

Synthesised from the findings of this research presented in the previous chapters, I provide the following definition:

Dialogic reflection is a theory of knowledge. It argues that individual knowledge about the world can be elicited from a co-operative exploration of experience. It is an artistic method of enquiry about the world that embraces multiple perspectives and vulnerability.

Dialogic reflection is a philosophy of knowledge based on experience and dialogue. Unlike classical empiricism, experience here does not refer to sensory data. Experience here is the intellectual, sensory, moral, emotional interaction with the world (Johnson and Lakoff 1992; Dewey 1934). When experience is subjected to dialogic reflection, the dialogue amongst reflectors about it elicit knowledge, new and old. The experience is not taken apart like some theories of reflection may suggest (Johns 2013; Fish et al. 1991; Gibbs 1988). In dialogic reflection, experience is framed and reframed by multiple world perspectives that reflectors have. In doing so, different aspects and elements of the experience become apparent.

Drawing knowledge from experience in dialogic reflection is done from the reflectors' world perspectives. Each reflector has a different world perspective hence he or she elicits and contributes different knowledge to the process. Knowledge here refers to knowledge about the world and self.

Dialogue is more than an exchange of words. It is an enquiry about the world where individuals in the dialogue create meaning by exploring their own values, thoughts, feelings and action (Issacs 1993). It requires one to respect others engaged in the dialogue (Freire 1970), for the knowledge and experience they bring. It is a co-operative approach to human flourishing (Heron and Reason 2001).

These concepts about dialogic reflection are arguably similar and dissimilar to other philosophies that perceive experience as the ultimate source of knowledge, such as empiricism, constructivism, and experientialism. Classical empiricists define experience rather differently, however. I place dialogic reflection as close relatives of constructivism and experientialism. Nonetheless, dialogic reflection is still distinct from them. Appendix L elaborates on this and discusses the ontological argument in dialogic reflection.

11.2. Taxonomy of Dialogic Reflection

Epistemic conflicts in theories of reflection exist because there is no one clear epistemology of reflection as discussed in Chapter Seven. I postulate that this epistemic confusion in the field is because reflection is being framed as a method, used by different epistemologies. This results in myriad theories about how it can be used in education (Kolb 2014; King and Kitchener 2004; Moon 2004; Gibbs 1988; Dewey 1933), practice (Wareing 2017; Johns 2013; Fish and de Cossart 2007; Fish et al. 1991), research (Torbert 2001), philosophy (Locke 1690) and professional development (Johns 2013; Fish and de Cossart 2007). However, these theories each have their place and are less confusing in dialogic reflection.

It was not useful to describe dialogic reflection as sequential steps of internal processes because of how varied it can be. Moreover, there is a risk conveying that dialogic reflection is a step by step process like Tigelaar et al.'s (2008) research. It is natural, dynamic, organic and sometimes even messy when reflectors get excited about their own reflective discussions.

However, it is possible to distinguish dialogic reflections according to their purpose and content of reflection. Dialogic reflection can be about topics external to oneself. These reflections are external in the sense that reflectors are more engaged in understanding the world than understanding themselves in the world. These reflections are about anything topical to the reflectors such as management of a difficult educator, dealing with a group member who is not pulling his or her weight or resolving ethical dilemmas in practice. I term dialogic reflections of

this nature as extrospection. Dialogic reflections can also be understanding oneself in the world. These are discussions about the internal workings of one's world version. These dialogic reflections tend to be related to one's values and morality, spirituality, beliefs, personal assumptions, interests and priorities. These dialogic reflections require one to reflect on oneself and understand where one sits in relation to the world. I call these dialogic reflections introspection. The following figure illustrates this relationship between extrospection, introspection and dialogic reflection.

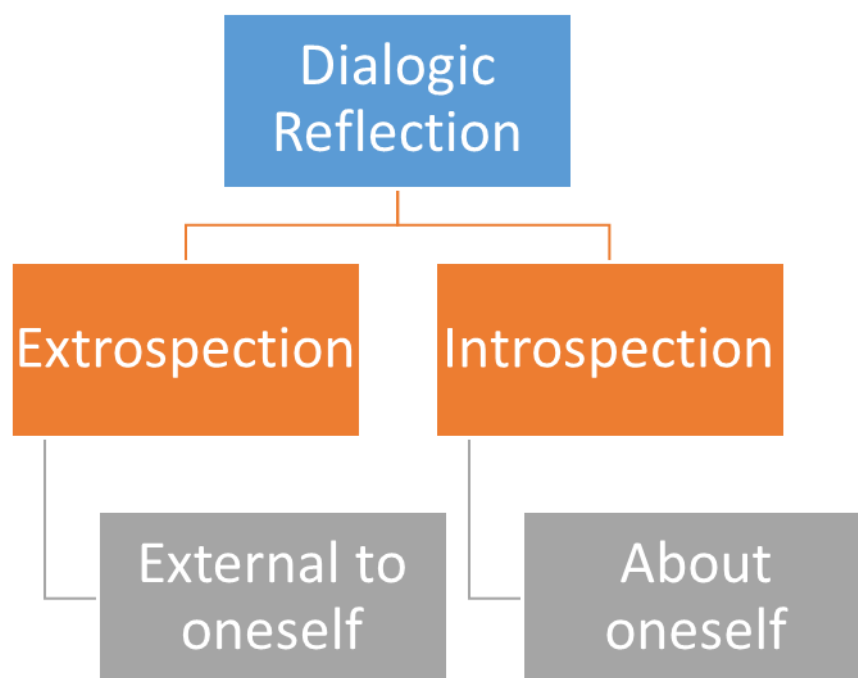


Figure 5. Taxonomy of dialogic reflection

Dialogic reflection is about constructing knowledge from experience. While extrospection and introspection may suggest that almost all dialogue is a dialogic reflection, they both must be about exploring experience and gaining some knowledge from it.

11.3. From Extrospection to Introspection

As extrospection is about topics external to oneself, some theories of reflection explicate this branch of the epistemology. Gibbs' (1988) work appears to be about extrospection, with its

procedural exploration of the experience that focuses on making sense of the experience, rather than understanding oneself. Johns' (2013) model of structured reflection achieves the same goal through thought-provoking prompts instead. However, it is arguable that some prompts relating to personal values may push the reflector into introspecting instead. Locke's (1690) use of reflection to understanding sensation is also extrospective in nature as it serves to develop an understanding of the world through experience.

Fish et al.'s (1991) Strands of Reflection, however, is a theory that transitions the reflector from extrospection to introspection. The Factual and Retrospective Strands are focused on understanding the experience, however, the Substratum Strand and Connective Strand push the reflector to consider how his or her personal theories affect his or her actions and how they are related to each other. In the concluding session of the research, a few co-researchers were confused about the idea of introspection. One co-researcher felt that introspection is about personal values while another felt that introspection could also be about values that are evident in one's practice. Both co-researchers argued that both are related to oneself, one as a professional and one in one's personal life. It is important to make this distinction because:

Values of the profession are not necessarily internalised by the person. Even though someone can practice what the profession teaches very well, it does not mean that she is going to live her life guided by the values of the profession. [Co-researcher in the concluding session]

Hence, we have decided that it is useful to further differentiate professional introspection from personal introspection. Fish and de Cossart's (2007) The Invisibles of practice encourages the reflector to perform professional introspection. It focuses heavily on one's practice experience and prompts the reflector to consider themselves in the practice experience. It then gradually leads the reflector into extrospection by widening the reflection to consider how this experience have changed their knowledge of their practice. Another theory of reflection that is useful for introspection is Wareing's (2017) Me, My, More, Must model of reflection.

Me	Who am I? What values are important to me as a person? What values are important to me as a healthcare worker? What do I need in order to feel confident at work? What decreases my confidence at work? What enables me to be able to practise effectively in a clinical or therapeutic area? What prevents me from practising effectively in a clinical or therapeutic area?
My	What are my thoughts and feelings regarding this learning experience, situation or incident? What concerns do I have regarding myself? What concerns do I have about other people involved in this experience? Who can help me make sense of this experience or situation? What impact have my values had on the people involved in this experience? What impact has my level of confidence had on how I have practised during this experience? In general, what have I learnt from this experience, situation or incident?
More	What questions have been generated from this experience, situation or incident? What ideas have been generated from this experience, situation or incident? What has surprised or puzzled me about this experience, situation or incident? What do I need to find out more, as a result of this experience, situation or incident?
Must	What must I do now to identify my learning needs? What must I do to identify my learning goals? Who must I speak to, to assist me in creating a learning or development plan? What must I include in the plan? What values must I explore in order to become the healthcare worker I wish to become?

Figure 6. Me, My, More, Must model of reflection (Wareing 2017, p. 271)

This model of reflection is heavily focused on personal and professional values. With reference to the figure above, it starts with personal introspection by asking the reflector who he or she is as a person, starting the reflection with understanding the reflector. It then gradually guides the reflector from self-discovery to making sense of oneself in one's practice, a professional introspection.

In the earlier chapters, I have discussed in detail about dialogic reflection as a form of natural enquiry about the world. In showing how reflective theories relate to dialogic reflection as an epistemology, I am showing how dialogic reflection can be understood as extrospection, professional introspection and personal introspection using these theories. Dialogic reflection should be natural and is best left unstructured. The above theories are not structures which one should use in a dialogic reflection, rather, they show how this epistemology can be understood when applied in education (Gibbs 1988), practice (Wareing 2017; Johns 2013; Fish and de

Cossart 2007; Fish et al. 1991) and professional development (Johns 2013; Fish and de Cossart 2007). It is also important to note that the theories of reflection above refer to reflection conducted in the monological sense. Hence, they cannot be used as structures for dialogic reflection because they do not accommodate multiple perspectives and dialogue.

11.4. Conclusion

Dialogic reflection is an epistemology where knowledge is constructed from the co-operative exploration of experience. It is an intellectual, value-laden, moral-driven, artistic way of knowing from experience. Dialogic reflection shares a close relationship to other philosophies such as experientialism and constructivism, however, it has a rather different perspective of the process of knowledge construction. It is useful to further understand dialogic reflection as branching out into extrospection, the exploration of the world, and introspection, the exploration of oneself. Introspection can be about oneself as a professional or as a person. The existing theories of reflection can provide us with some understanding of what it means to extrospect or introspect, however, it is important to note that they are not theories of dialogic reflection.

Part Four: Implications and Applications of Dialogic Reflection

The chapters in Part Four are discussions about significance of the findings in relation to the application of this theory of dialogic reflection. The chapters in Part Four explore the application and implication of this epistemology in education and professional practice. In this part of the thesis I discuss the uses of dialogic reflection as an epistemology in these settings and I am careful not to convey that dialogic reflection should be applied solely as a learning method or a tool to prove professional development. To support these discussions, I draw on information from the literature review I had conducted, my further readings as the research developed and where appropriate, I support the discussion with some data from the research.

Chapter Twelve discusses the implications and applications of dialogic reflection in academic settings. It provides suggestions on how dialogic reflection can be taught and learned. It also explores some suggestions for the assessment of dialogic reflection.

Chapter Thirteen discusses the implications and applications of dialogic reflection in professional practice settings. Occupational therapy practice is the focus here as an example of a profession that can benefit from dialogic reflection. Through an exploration of the professional philosophy, this chapter looks at the importance of professional and personal introspection. It also explains a theory of professional development that was developed in this research, as part of understanding the role of dialogic reflection in professional practice.

Chapter 12. Learning, Teaching, Guiding and Assessing Dialogic Reflection

In Part Three, some issues surrounding reflection and dialogic reflection have been discussed:

1. Reflection can be perceived from different epistemic stances
2. The process of reflection is nebulous
3. Reflection is sometimes seen as a tick-box exercise and can be made excessively academic
4. Reticence is often present when it comes to sharing one's reflection, hence the reflection that is presented is also often a false version or an edited version of the true reflection
5. Dialogic reflection similarly demands a great degree of vulnerability on the reflectors' part
6. Reflecting and dialogically reflecting is tantamount to sharing a part of one's world to others

This chapter addresses these issues about reflection and dialogic reflection. It discusses the implications of this reconceptualisation of dialogic reflection in education and how it impacts learning about, teaching and assessing reflection and dialogic reflection.

The curriculum can be seen as a triadic relationship between epistemology, pedagogy and assessment (Knight et al. 2013). Therefore, learning, teaching and assessing dialogic reflection should be in line with the epistemology itself. It is important to note that this chapter is about

how dialogic reflection can be taught, learned and assessed, as an epistemology, not a skill for professional practice or a method of learning.

During this research, both groups had some discussions about placing dialogic reflection in the curriculum. However due to the issues that we had faced as described in Chapter Seven, most of the suggestions were deemed inappropriate. These discussions had a great influence in my writing of this chapter nonetheless. Therefore, where appropriate, I also refer to some conversations that my co-researchers and I had, to further support the discussion.

12.1. Epistemology, Pedagogy and Assessment

Katz (2000) described competency, pedagogy, and epistemology as the holy trinity of the curriculum. Harlen (2007) wrote about a triadic relationship between pedagogy, assessment, and practice. Synthesising the works of Katz (2000) and Harlen (2007), Knight et al. (2013) presented the following triad which depicts the relationship between pedagogy, epistemology, and assessment.

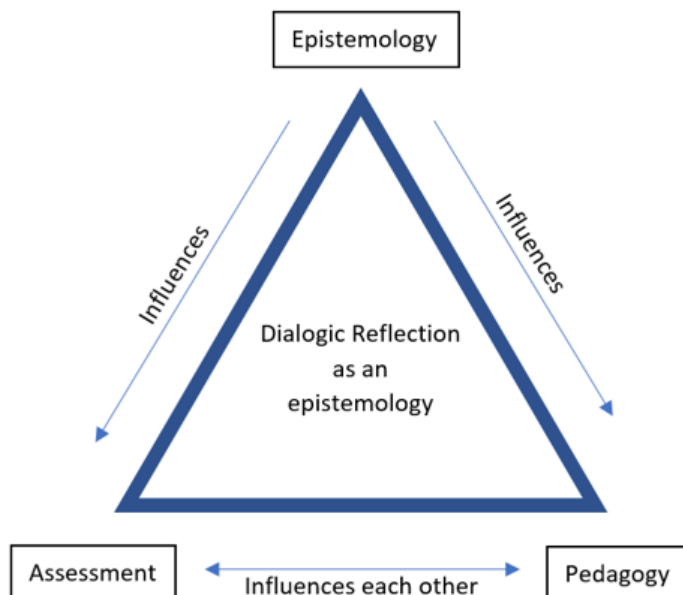


Figure 7. The Epistemology-Assessment-Pedagogy triad (Knight et al. 2013; Knight et al. 2014)

In this figure, epistemology refers to the philosophical study of knowledge about the subject to be learned or taught. Pedagogy here refers to how the knowledge about the subject can be taught or learned and assessment is the tool of measurement for this learning (Knight et al. 2013). In this triad however, it is not accurate to say that epistemology, pedagogy, and assessment always influence each other (Knight et al. 2014). Katz (2000) saw epistemology as underpinning methods in pedagogy and assessment. Pedagogy and assessment, however, share an interdependent relationship. Knight et al. (2013) explained that epistemology drives assessments that reveal the students' knowledge and drives pedagogies to teach that knowledge. This may perhaps differ depending on the subject of study (Knight et al. 2014). In the context of learning dialogic reflection as an epistemology, the triadic relationship is as described above.

12.2. Epistemology

Dialogic reflection is its own epistemology. To recap, dialogic reflection rests on three key principles:

1. Mediating theory and practice with values
2. Democratic dialogue
3. Dialogic reflectors are unique knowers and enquirers

Dialogic reflection is about bridging theories and practice through value-driven enquiry. It grounds reflectors in the value of the experience that is being explored and what it means to the reflector. By understanding the meaning of experience to the reflector, the reflector shifts between making sense of the theories evident in the experience and the practical aspects of it.

Democratic dialogue in dialogic reflection is a result of careful consideration of the reflective environment. Dialogue that is truly democratic is emancipatory, compassionate, cathartic, and honest. However, it is not easily achieved as it demands a great degree of vulnerability and trust.

Dialogic reflectors are knowers and enquirers who have their unique perspective of the world based on their knowledge and experience. While dialogic reflection welcomes the sharing of knowledge and experience from each reflector, it also celebrates the fact that these reflectors are different individuals who may have disparate interests in the reflection.

12.3. Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the art of instruction. In this thesis, it specifically refers to the strategies, techniques and approaches that educators can employ when teaching dialogic reflection as an epistemology (Kirschner 2009). As the pedagogy here is influenced by the epistemology of dialogic reflection, the ways of teaching and learning dialogic reflection should relate closely to its key principles. Currently, in occupational therapy, the methods of teaching reflection can be considered rote where students are taught the theories of reflection and expected to demonstrate their understanding through the application of these theories in their own reflections, often in the written essay form (Wong et al. 2016). However, as Russell (2005) had put it, teaching reflection is more than lecturing about it and then hoping for the best. Learning reflection requires ample guidance and room for practice without judgement (Wong et al. 2016). Dialogic reflection, though closely related to reflection, is trickier to teach and learn because of the principle of democratic dialogue. However, since dialogic reflection is natural, it poses the question as to whether it needs to be taught; in fact, can it even be taught?

Pedagogical approaches to teaching dialogic reflection should be focused on positioning dialogic reflection in the curriculum such that it can be better learnt rather than producing strategies to teach it to students. Dialogic reflection is natural, and students engage in it out of empathy and compassion. Therefore, there is no need to teach a student how to reflect dialogically. However, a student must learn about dialogic reflection. Learning about dialogic reflection shifts the focus to practising dialogic reflection and self-conceptualising its role in the student's life. As the principle of dialogic reflection states, reflectors take from dialogic reflection knowledge that has

meaning to them in their own world versions. The purpose and process of dialogic reflection have different meanings to these reflectors and this is often in line with how they have chosen to perceive the world. Similar to the issues in reflection, the meaning of dialogic reflection can be perceived differently. The difference here lies in the fact that these disparate meanings of dialogic reflection is the part of the reason for multiple perspectives and therefore needs to be embraced completely.

In this vein, two pedagogic approaches appear to be in line with the principles of dialogic reflection. Experiential learning appreciates the reflective aspect of dialogic reflection and the principle of mediating theory and practice. Andragogy, on the other hand, respects dialogic reflectors as knowers and enquirers (Knowles 1970). The principle of democratic dialogue, however, poses an issue to the pedagogy of dialogic reflection and it is useful to see the pedagogic approaches to guiding extrospection as slightly different from that of introspection.

12.3.1. Experiential Learning and Dialogic Reflection

The value of reflection in education is its ability to bridge theory and practice and this is well explained by the theories of experiential learning (Kolb 2014). Experiential learning is a way of learning in which “the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied” (Keeton and Tate 1978, p. 2). This idea is echoed in dialogic reflection through epistemic participation. From this perspective, experiential learning places emphasis on the sensory experience and action that happens in the context, using them as primary sources of learning (Kolb 2014). Specifically, in the occupational therapy curriculum in Cardiff University, experiential learning takes the form of practice education and to a certain extent, research modules. It is complementary to the PBL approach and keynote lectures in the curriculum.

In consideration of Lewin’s (1946) action research model, Dewey’s (1938) model of learning and Piaget’s (1936) model of cognitive development, Kolb synthesised that experiential learning is full of conflict. However, it is only through these conflicts can the learner attain new knowledge,

skills and attitudes. Hence to be an effective learner, one would require the following four abilities or modes of learning (Kolb 2014):

- Concrete experience – the ability to immerse fully and freely in new experiences with an open mind, clear of bias
- Reflective observation – the ability to reflect on and observe experiences from multiple perspectives
- Abstract conceptualisation – the ability to create concepts that integrate observations into logically sound theories
- Active experimentation – the ability to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems

The relationship between these four modes of learning is illustrated in the figure below.

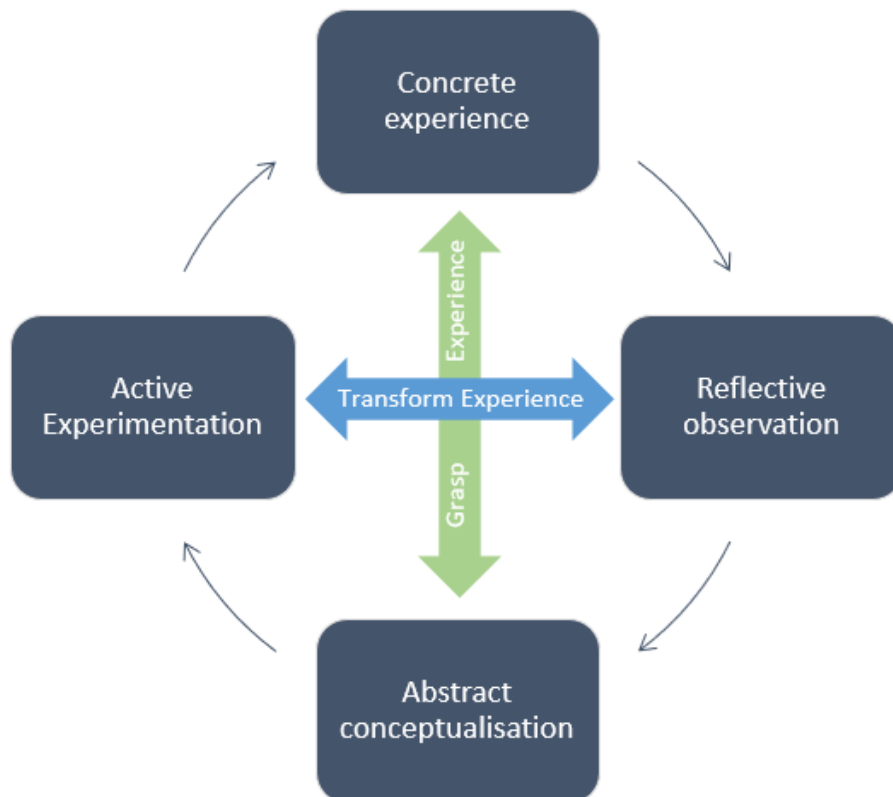


Figure 8. Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb 2014)

With reference to the above figure, the conflict in experiential learning lies in the two primary dimensions of learning: grasping experience and transforming experience. To grasp experience, the learner is expected to be immersed in the totality of the experience with an open mind, whilst also generate concepts and integrate observations to make sense of the experience. To transform this experience, the learner is expected to engage in reflective thought whilst also actively experimenting new action. Negotiating these conflicts is where the difficulties of experiential learning lay.

Learning arises from the resolution of creative tension among these four learning modes ... Immediate or concrete experiences are the basis for observations and reflections. These reflections are assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn. These implications can be actively tested and serve as guides in creating new experience. (Kolb 2014, p. 51)

Kolb (2014) believed that learning is where knowledge is generated from the grasping and transformation of experience, where the former refers to the capturing of information and the latter refers to the interpretation and action on the information.

Practice education modules in the occupational therapy curriculum are opportunities for experiential learning to take place (Knightbridge 2014). The real-life practice situations offer students the “shock of direct concrete experience” (Kolb 2014, p. 57) they require to kick-start the experiential learning cycle.

Moon (2004) proposed that experiential learning needs to be deliberate and does not occur automatically when the learner has an experience. However, experiential learning does not emerge from just any experience. Novel situations and problems where the learner has insufficient knowledge seem more likely to trigger experiential learning (Davies and Easterby-Smith 1984). In addition, these specific experiences need to occur at the right time and place (Moon 2004). The ability to unlearn is also perhaps more important than learning in experiential

learning (Brew 2000), in other words, the learner needs to be flexible and open to the possibility of mistakes and errors (Moon 2004).

However, dialogic reflection is naturally triggered similarly by these emotions and perplexity, so it may not need to be a deliberate process. These conditions for experiential learning are similar to those that trigger dialogic reflection:

If someone upsets you and it is really bad. [Alicia in concluding session]

Or if it is something that you find difficult. [Nicola in concluding session]

Or something that you have seen and it is hard to understand, you want to try to work it out. [Charlotte in concluding session]

My co-researchers noted that dialogic reflection is triggered by emotions and perplexity. Sarah shared that her brother often reflects with her to celebrate his success and to better understand what he had done well at. These triggers for dialogic reflection appear to be triggers for experiential learning as well. There are also similarities between the nature of dialogic reflection and experiential learning. Like experiential learning, dialogic reflection is about learning from experience, but through a dialogue about the experience.

Schön (1987) articulated something similar about learning about reflecting. Reflection constructs new knowledge that manifests in future experiences, which in turn become new materials for reflection. Therefore, to better learn about reflection, one must practice it (Russell 2005). Due to dialogic reflection being rather similar in this respect, practising dialogic reflection is the best way to learn about it. This process of learning through practising is congruent to the experiential learning which makes it an important pedagogic approach to learn about dialogic reflection.

Dewey (1933) argued that:

The assumption that information which has been accumulated apart from the use in the recognition and solution of a problem may be later on be freely employed at will by thought is quite false. (Dewey 1933, p. 53)

Learning about something ought to be in the context of its application. In other words, dialogic reflection needs to be learned through the application of it in real life situations. This way, it can be “freely employed at will” later (Dewey 1933, p. 53).

Smith (1990) similarly argued that,

Knowledge exists only in the activities and participation of subjects as knowers. (Smith 1990, p. 66)

To create knowledge about something, one must immerse oneself in it. Dialogic reflection should be learned in its immersion. This alludes to epistemic participation that is inherent in Co-operative Inquiry (Heron 1996) and dialogic reflection. Knowledge creation is done through the embodiment of the experience. Knowers experience and through that they create new knowledge about the experience (Heron 1996). Dialogic reflection follows the same process in knowledge construction. Dialogic reflection is a place for epistemic participation to take place, and through that, reflectors experience dialogic reflection and create knowledge about themselves

Experiential learning and dialogic reflection share some similarities which make experiential learning a suitable pedagogic approach to learning dialogic reflection. However, this is not to say that they are both one and the same.

Kolb (2014, p. 57) argued that reflection is “one facet of a holistic process of learning from experience” and is not the “sole determinant of learning and development”. Kolb (2014) argued that reflection in isolation can alienate the learner from the world, seeking constant self-confirmation and being unable to arrive at conclusions or experimental action. Reflection needs to be supplemented by other processes, such as abstract conceptualisation which gives it

complexity and the capacity for critical thinking, to be able to accommodate multiple perspectives and methods of analysis (Kolb 2014). However, I argue that dialogic reflection is exactly the answer to Kolb's (2014) critique about reflection being insufficient to generate knowledge on its own. Dialogic reflection is obviously about dialogue and reflection and being so has allowed it to accommodate multiple perspectives and methods of analysis as argued in Chapter Nine and Chapter Eight respectively. Allowing multiple world versions to meet offers reflectors multiple perspectives while empathy and the need to support each other encourages reflectors to adopt various methods of analysis. In this respect, dialogic reflection can be deemed as a better way to reflect.

12.3.2. Andragogy and Dialogic Reflection

Reflectors in dialogic reflection should be treated as individuals who already possess knowledge and experience, and their own unique perspective of the world based on them. This is in line the principles of andragogy, a theory of adult education advanced by Knowles (1970).

Andragogy is a departure from the didactic method of teaching where students are expected to sit and listen while the educator lectures at them. Freire (1970) noted that there are pedagogical strategies that perceive students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. In this sense, the purpose of the intellectually superior educator is to feed the student with information. Healthcare education tends to favour the lecture style of teaching since it saves times and allows large cohorts of students to be taught at the same time (Rolfe 2013). Simultaneously, the focus in teaching appears to be on passing students on assessments rather than on learning (Rolfe 2013). Such a pedagogic style is the antithesis of the principles of dialogic reflection. Dialogic reflection demands that reflectors are to be respected for their world perspectives, their knowledge and experience that they contribute. It denounces the idea of *tabula rasa* where learners are thought to be clean slates or empty vessels. Wang's (1916) work was centred around the belief that learning is about unveiling innate knowledge about the world rather than accumulating knowledge about it.

As opposed to child education, andragogy is the study of adult education. Approaches to teaching in andragogy are specific for adult learning and hence, are generally more suitable than pedagogic approaches for children. This is because adults and children do not differ merely in quantitative terms (Vygotsky and Luria 1992). Along with the age difference comes a wealth of knowledge and experience, complexity of thought and a different identity as a learner (Vygotsky and Luria 1992). Knowles (1970) delineated the following differences in andragogy and pedagogy, which make up its tenets:

1. As part of maturation, adults graduate from dependency and have a greater desire to direct their own learning.
2. Adults learners possess a greater body of experience and knowledge which are great sources of learning for themselves and others.
3. Educators in adult education have more responsibility to help adults to learn and less to teach them what they wish to learn.
4. The purpose of education shifts towards being for greater self-actualisation and away from learning for future application.

The responsibility for knowledge acquisition shifts from the teacher to the adult learner. Rather than teaching one about the world, one has the autonomy to direct one's own concept of the world. This is similar in dialogic reflection where it is not about teaching each other rather it is about what each reflector learns from the analysis of his or her own experiences or that of others. Knowles (1970) noted that to accommodate such a difference in education, it is important that the learning environment is suitable for adult learning. Apart from the physical environment having to respect the learners as adults, such as having full-sized furnishings, the psychological environment is even more important. Learners and educators should exist in a mutual relationship where they are joint enquirers. Freire (1970) saw the dialogue between the student and teacher as where they are all co-investigators. This is similar to the requirements

for democratic dialogue. Dialogue is only democratic where participants are open to share their own experiences and accept the opinions of others. This, along with the demand for vulnerability and trust, places reflectors on an equal level. Failure to achieve this results in reticence. Boniface (2002) attributed the success of a reflection to the reflective environment. In her research, it was concluded that for occupational therapists to be able to reflect, the environment should first be accommodating for reflection to occur. One such criterion is where the reflector can reflect and be free of judgement, which is often unachievable in the presence of a supervisor or educator.

As adults identify themselves by their own life experience, they place great value in their experience (Knowles 1970).

And so, when they find themselves in situations in which their experiences is not being used, or its worth is minimized, it is not just their experience that is being rejected – they feel rejected as persons. (Knowles 1970, p. 50)

This concept is in line with the principle of dialogic reflection. When dialogic reflection fails to respect reflectors for their unique knowledge and experience, its purpose changes from gathering multiple perspectives to seeking confirmation and affirmation of one's reflection. In other words, when the value of multiple perspectives is lost, dialogic reflection is reduced to merely reflecting in front of other people, rather than reflecting with others. Knowles (1970) recommended experiential learning as part of the andragogical approach as well.

12.3.3. Teaching and Learning About Dialogic Reflection

Experiential learning and andragogy provide two pedagogical approaches to learning that share some similarities with the nature of dialogic reflection. They indicate some considerations in the teaching of, or rather learning about, dialogic reflection:

1. Dialogic reflection is best learned through experiencing it

2. It should not be taught, rather it should be learned. Pedagogical approaches should focus on assisting the student in learning about it.
3. Pedagogical approaches should make use of the student's experience and knowledge as materials to learn about dialogic reflection
4. The right reflective environment for learning dialogic reflection is required.

This chapter is about learning or teaching dialogic reflection as an epistemology, not as a skill, nor as a learning tool or a way to demonstrate professional development. Therefore, the pedagogical approach to teaching or learning about it should be similar to teaching about a philosophical idea. In that vein, it would be inappropriate, ineffective and even reductive to *train* students to reflect dialogically. Rather, the purpose of teaching and learning about dialogic reflection should be about being aware of dialogic reflection and understanding how it applies to one's life. The role of the educator is thus to make students aware of dialogic reflection and to make room for its application in the curriculum. The responsibility is on the learner to identify where they have experienced dialogic reflection in their lives, in and out of the university setting, and find what dialogic reflection means to them.

From Boyd and Fales' (1983) work,

I know that I reflect and I consider myself a reflective person, but I have never thought about it and I am not exactly sure what it is that I do. (Boyd and Fales 1983, p. 99)

There is a similar sense of confusion within this research,

I think I am reflective, but I am not sure if that is a good thing sometimes I play stuff over and over again and that can lead to anxiety. [Sarah in group one]

We all have the ability to worry about what we have done ... That's reflective, isn't it? [May in group one]

My co-researchers thought of themselves as reflective however they were unable to explain how they reflect. Rather they have seemed to relate reflection and dialogic reflection to

something more common such as over thinking, worrying and anxiety. This suggested that perhaps how one reflects dialogically reside in the tacit dimension. That would explain the difficulty that my co-researchers had when they attempted to articulate the process of dialogic reflection and reflection. As the process of dialogic reflection is perhaps tacit, it is not something that educators can teach.

This means that there are limits to which dialogic reflection can be taught and not that it is completely unteachable. Educators can teach about dialogic reflection, the principles of the epistemology, the difficulties and potential of this way of knowing, the taxonomy of dialogic reflection and the difference between extrospection and introspection but they cannot teach the students how to reflect dialogically. I experienced the same when writing this thesis, where I could delineate the intricacies of dialogic reflection, but I am unable to write about how one can dialogically reflect with others. Writing about the types of analysis and roles in reflection is as close to the process of dialogic reflection as I could achieve. To a certain extent, I am unable to propose a model of dialogic reflection. However, it is possible to express how this epistemology can be delivered in the curriculum.

Russell (2005) expressed a similar difficulty when it came to teaching reflection. Teaching reflection by lecturing students on the theories and then expecting them to apply them in their own practice was futile. It led to reflective writings that were obviously fabricated, contrived and ironically unreflective. However, he found certain success in teaching reflection without using the word reflection. Instead, he guided students on their reflection, asking appropriate questions to push the students into thinking deeper. Schön (1983) did not explicate the process of reflective practice, instead, he showed it via a series of examples where reflective practice was evident or poorly done. Critiques about his work being unclear and lacking a definitive reflective process miss the point of his work. The value of *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön

1983) is not in how to do reflective practice, rather it is the epistemology of practice that he had offered. This was declared in Schön's (1983) preface of his book.

In this book I offer an approach to epistemology of practice based on a close examination of what some practitioners - architects, psychotherapists, engineers, planners, and managers - actually do. (Schön 1983, p. viii)

The process of reflection cannot be taught because it is tacit and cannot be standardised. Similarly, dialogic reflection has the same quality in education. Educators can teach the theories of dialogic reflection if they so wish but they cannot teach students *how* to dialogically reflect. The theories underpinning dialogic reflection have limited use when it comes to applying the principles of the epistemology because of this. This would be further explained later in this chapter.

I am not sure if I have met anyone who has said: "a model really made me become a reflective practitioner". [Sarah in group one]

A student is dialogically reflective not because of his or her awareness of the underpinnings of the epistemology, but because he or she finds meaning in it and applies it. Therefore, the educator should seek to help the student find this meaning and create the right environments to apply it. Less effort should be placed on teaching about dialogic reflection. As dialogic reflection is a way of knowing and not a skill, one can dialogically reflect with others without *knowing about* dialogic reflection.

12.3.3.1. Guiding Extrospection

Guiding dialogic reflection should be the primary goal of education rather than teaching it.

However, the question is how does the educator guide something that is not taught? Dialogic reflection uses dialogue as a platform for reflection to occur hence the first approach should involve turning dialogue that happens in the curriculum into dialogic reflection. Not all dialogue is reflective, however, they can be made reflective.

Dialogue is everywhere in the university, between students and between students and educators. They exist in the form of discussions such as supervision, journal club discussions, round table discussions, external speakers and PBL group meetings (Cardiff University 2012). These discussions are often about a pre-determined topic which is external to the self, such as journal club discussions about a specific article. Hence, they are suitable to be made into extrospection which is about reflecting on an experience and drawing knowledge about matters external to the self.

The difference between a discussion and an extrospection is the reflective component. Firstly, participants of a discussion are commenting and analysing these external topics, without talking about their own experiences which is crucial for the process of group world making. Secondly, even when experiences are shared, the group does not always reflect on them dialogically.

The solution to the first problem is rather simple, to ask group members to share their own experiences related to the topic of discussion. In the concluding session with my co-researchers, I asked if a model of reflection would be useful to structure an extrospection.

We only need that first part, to get people to talk about their experiences. Like when you said let's talk about placement experiences, we all just contributed. [Lea in the concluding session]

This “first part” that Lea was referring to is the first step of most, if not all, reflective models: describing the experience. Again, my co-researchers had discouraged the use of a model of reflection to guide extrospection. Initiating an extrospection requires one to simply to ask people about their own experiences with the topic. May from group one facilitated an extrospective session with her PBL group by following Gibbs’ (1988) model of reflection, however, she reported that it was difficult to follow the model procedurally because of how the dialogue progressed organically. She believed that her group would have been able to achieve the same, if not deeper reflection, without the model. At present, because this research started

from the point where both research groups trusted each other to reflect comfortably and they both preferred natural and unstructured dialogic reflections, suggestions on the use of models for extrospection were speculative at best. It was suggested that models of reflection may help a new group where members are not as familiar with each other, but it is something that warrants further research.

The second problem where the group does not always reflect on experiences dialogically is far trickier as it points to several other issues that relate to dialogic reflection. It appears that democratic dialogue is something that is as difficult to achieve as it is powerful. Group members are not reflecting even when an experience is shared because,

1. There is insufficient information about the experience to reflect on
2. The experience shared does not trigger reflection
3. Group members are not motivated to reflect
4. Group members are reticent about reflecting

The first two issues go hand in hand. In this research, not every experience results in an elaborate dialogic reflection. As shown in the excerpt in Chapter Eight, there are multiple different experiences shared in the same reflection as part of the reflective process. However, they are secondary to the primary experience that the group was reflecting on which was Sophie's bad experience with her educator. While more information can be prompted, it is often the case where the dialogue carries on until the group arrives at an experience that evokes strong emotions, is perplexing or something that the group finds difficult to make sense of.

The last two issues are more difficult to negotiate as they pertain to the reflective environment and how much democratic dialogue it affords. Dialogic reflection is driven primarily by empathy and compassion, therefore if the group members do not feel that way, it is less likely that they would be encouraged to reflect dialogically. The crux of this issue lies in the makeup of the group. Dialogic reflection is not about having the right number of people in the group, rather it

is about having the right people in the group. A group of peers is more likely to empathise and have compassion for each other due to their shared experiences. When group members are reticent about reflecting, it is more likely that the wrong people are in the group. This means that the group is not at the point where they can trust each other. Extrospection demands less vulnerability and trust, mostly because it is about topics external to oneself. The reflection is about gaining a better understanding of the topic, rather than looking inwardly and drawing an understanding about oneself. Therefore, the group is unlikely to be reticent about extrospecting, but the same cannot be said for introspecting. In this sense, democratic dialogue is less important in extrospection, relative to introspection.

12.3.3.2. Guiding Introspection

Guiding introspection is difficult, if not impractical in the curriculum. In Chapter Eight, I explored the characteristics of the perfect facilitator: shared experience but external to the group, more knowledgeable but not superior, confident but sensitive. The perfect person to reflect with is elusive and not always the same person. It is also highly likely that the educator is the wrong person to introspect with, resulting in some reticence due to the power they have over the students. Educators who wish to be part of the introspection are faced with a single option, to be a reflector in the group and not an educator.

I had faced the same issue with facilitating the dialogic reflections. While I was busy playing the devil's advocate, trying to prompt deeper reflection, I was not actively sharing my own experiences and playing the reflector role. Fortunately for me, my co-researchers were concerned and interested enough to ask me about my own experiences. If I had not responded or made this realisation, the group world could have formed with my exclusion.

Lea made the following observation about her educators.

I have not seen any evidence of my educators reflecting on themselves. And I find that really strange because they are marking me on it and it is something that I need to learn

how to do because it is part of the marking criteria, but they are not showing how they do it and they are not showing evidence to me that they have done it. [Lea in group two]

The relationship between dialogic reflectors can be perceived to be transactional. If one wants others to introspect with one, then one must be willing to introspect with others. This is the trust building process and educators or facilitators are no exceptions to it. For educators to encourage introspection in whatever discursive settings, they must be able to forgo, for that moment, their superiority and be a reflector. That means sharing his or her experience, good or bad, and subjecting himself or herself to scrutiny. Guiding introspection is not the same as applying Johns' (2013) Model of Structured Reflection, which was theorised for a supervisor to guide reflection. It is not as much about asking the right prompts as about the educator allowing others to prompt himself or herself to introspect. The educator who wishes to guide introspection should also allow himself or herself to be guided on his or her reflection by the students. Only doing so will the group world form, welcoming of the input of the educator. Nonetheless, this may be an uncomfortable position for the educator.

It is the power differences, they have power and that is why you feel vulnerable. If it was a completely neutral, even relationship you probably would but unfortunately, they have power over you and you are in a weaker position ... Even if you get on with your educator, you still would err on the side of caution because when you reflect you are showing, well not your flaws but things you struggle with, your weaknesses or difficulties you are having, and you wonder how that is going to be received and interpreted then by the educator even if they come across as friendly or go through the reflection with you. It is how they feel about it that you are concerned with. [Olivia in group two]

Getting educators to introspect with students, not facilitate reflection, is difficult as it concerns the power differentials between them. Even with suggesting that educators should share their experiences and show vulnerability to the students, I believe that it is perhaps best if the educator excuses himself or herself from the group during introspection.

Narrative pedagogy is a similar approach that encourages educators and students to engage in dialogues about their experiences and thus, learn together (Diekelmann 2001; Ironside 2005).

When teachers enact Narrative Pedagogy, students and teachers engage in public and communal thinking and dialogue that turns on sharing and interpreting their experiences to discover new understandings ... (Ironside 2005, p. 479)

Narrative pedagogy is a departure from conventional pedagogies that are concerned with conveying knowledge in a systematic manner to achieve specific learning outcomes (Diekelmann 2001). Through the sharing of experiences, students and teachers engaged in narrative pedagogies explore different ways of interpreting, thinking and understanding experiences. This approach to learning allows teachers and students to develop in their own ways, as a result of their different interpretations of experiences.

Narrative pedagogy argues for the importance of teachers and students being joint enquirers and the value of teachers sharing their own experiences with students to develop their own practice and learn alongside the student (Diekelmann 2001). This allows the student and teacher to engage in a converging conversation that is thought-provoking and impels joint enquirers to be openminded.

Extrospection can be seen as a form of narrative pedagogy where educators and students engage in a reflective dialogue about their own experiences in relation to an external topic. Reflective dialogue similarly encourages educators and students to interpret experiences and learn in their own ways. Both dialogic reflection and narrative pedagogy share the same difficulty of overcoming power differentials. Dialogic reflection between educators and students is perhaps even trickier as it does not only involve all parties to show vulnerability, it is a form of confessional to wrong-doings, oversight, failure, inability and negligence as much as it is about sharing good practice. As such there are ethical concerns when conducting this within the university environment and sharing of such intimate experiences can have devastating

professional ramifications for both students and teachers. There is also the added problem of false reflections that could taint or skew the learning process. Dialogic reflection is more than storytelling. Unlike narrative pedagogy, there is a tendency and a desire to share intimate details and natural focus on experiences that are emotional or even morally questionable. Thus, it would perhaps be dangerous to conduct dialogic reflection as one would in narrative pedagogy. Like Boniface (2002) argued, people who have the power to sit in judgement of others do not make good reflective partners.

In fact, a possible scenario in journal club is where the educator facilitates the discussion about an article, guides it into an extrospective session by asking members to share their experiences then leaves the group to allow the students to introspect on the topic. If dialogic reflection is about trust then the educators should similarly trust the students to be able to regulate their own introspection, this would also show a degree of respect for them as adults.

Sometimes even peers do not make the best introspective partners. As introspection is highly personal, one tends to be even more fussy about who to introspect with. While peers tend to good introspective partners, the co-researchers have pointed out that they sometimes prefer to introspect with their partners and family members.

They don't need to be someone with direct experience with it and that can be helpful in different ways ... [Sarah in group one]

I think someone who is actively listening as well to what you are sort of saying to them. If they are not understanding of where you are coming from, you do not feel like you get the support that you need to put that issue to bed ... [Nicola in group one]

When dialogic reflectors seek someone to introspect with, they seek support and empathy and not professional advice. Hence those who can provide that support that is needed tend to be better introspective partners than educators or practitioners, who have more experience in practice. Consequently, it is often that dialogic reflectors find people outside the university to

introspect with. Introspection in bigger groups is rather problematic because there is a greater possibility that there are people that one would rather not introspect with present. In addition, introspection with an educator is often inappropriate. Due to the difficulties in creating the right reflective environment for introspection, it is perhaps impractical to expect students to do so in the curriculum. Students should be encouraged to introspect for it grants them a clearer understanding of their world, but should also be left to find their own introspective partners or even introspect on their own if they so wish. Introspection cannot be forced.

Unsurprisingly, the research groups had difficulty expressing prompts for triggering introspection. They had noted that it was just the way they show support for each other. It was previously noted that some models of reflection appear prompt introspection (Fish et al. 1991; Fish and de Cossart 2007; Johns 2013; Wareing 2017), however, as with extrospection, it is only speculative and more research is required to explore the extent of their usefulness in introspection.

I had a small degree of success with prompting the co-researchers to introspect. An example of this is cited below and previously in Chapter Ten, where Sarah made a realisation about how her other peers have inspired her on the course when reflecting on a member of her PBL group who was not co-operating. I had prompted this introspection by asking:

Have you internalised anything from that interaction with that person? Have you picked up any sort of reflection on yourself and your own beliefs? [Me in group one]

I attempted to prompt the group into introspection by turning the focus of the reflection from being external, about the particular PBL group member, to being internal, about looking inwardly at oneself and the knowledge about oneself that one had elicited. This was not completely successful because it still led to some co-researchers reflecting externally instead of internally.

I think it is an example of what everybody doesn't want to be. I am not sure without that example, everyone is at a similar example and it kind of sets the bar for what you don't want to be. [Eve in group one]

I had hesitated to consider this response as a good example of introspection because while she was reflecting on what she disagreed with, she was still focused on reflecting about that person, hence remaining extrospective and external to herself. Sarah followed up with:

I think it makes people more conscientious about their work, but I think we lose some of the more interesting styles of group dynamics. Earlier on we were talking about the roles which I can't quite remember either, but we were talking about some members are really good about coming up with ideas and some are good at keeping us on track and all that stuff that we have at different degrees and more subtle and interesting. It would be great to go like "you know what, I am not very good at putting stuff into something more practical, maybe I could work on that" or "maybe I can take a step back and not take that much of a leadership role". [Sarah in group one]

Sarah who responded to my prompt similarly showed some extrospection when she was talking about the PBL group member making others “more conscientious about their work” and about the roles that other people play in the group. However, she gets closer to introspecting when she was talking about some of the lessons that could be learnt from the experience. She arrived at introspection later in the reflection where she looked at what she had internalised from the experience with that PBL group member.

We get so caught up with one person and I think like from the very start of this course I found like everyone is very dedicated and more than any other course I have done including post-graduate stuff, it felt different and felt like everybody knew why they were here, what they want to do and I have been inspired by that, straight away I was like this is the level I am at and this is what I want to be doing. [Sarah in group one]

Here, Sarah reflected on herself and where she saw herself on the course. She found that her peers were inspirational and through them, she found some meaning in being on the course. The point where she arrived at introspection was when she said: “This is the level I am at and

this is what I want to be doing.” It was an affirmation spoken with conviction. It suggested a great degree of internal reflection had occurred. While I had elicited this with my prompt, I doubt that it was an introspection that occurred there and then. It appeared as though it was something that this co-researcher had struggled with and reflected upon extensively prior. Identifying introspection was not easy. Even though there was a change in the use of pronouns from the third or second person to the first person in the examples above it, it required some interpretation.

Introspection is far harder to guide in the curriculum because of the difficulty of prompting students into doing it, finding the right reflective partner and interpreting the introspection itself. Therefore, expecting the students to introspect in the university setting is rather impractical. While it can be encouraged by providing the right environment for it, introspection is perhaps best left to the student to conduct on their own volition and on their own terms. The onus is thus placed on the student to find an introspective partner to do so or do it on his or her own.

Extrospection, on the other hand, is something that can be part of the curriculum. There is no need set up extrospective groups as many discussions at occur in the university or even on placement can be made extrospective. The first step is simply to ask group members to share their own experiences with the topic of discussions. The next step is to allow the dialogue to arrive at an experience that triggers dialogic reflection. It is also possible to transition from an extrospection to an introspection depending on the membership of the group, the reflective environment, and the using the right prompts to turn the dialogic reflection from extrospection to introspection

12.4. Assessment

Similar to pedagogy, the assessment of dialogic reflection should be in accordance with the principles of the epistemology. Assessment in this triadic relationship is purposed to reveal what

the students know (Knight et al. 2013), not to measure the what the student knows. In other words, “it is assessment for learning” (Knight et al. 2013, p. 76) and not an assessment of learning. However, to serve this purpose, assessment is concerned with developing representations of the knowledge that is being imparted.

This distinction of the purpose of assessment is important because in developing a way to assess dialogic reflection, educators, institutions and even the professional body need to clarify what is it they would like to assess in the first place. From Chapter Three and Chapter Seven about reflection and the difficulties about it, I have shown what happens when this purpose of assessment is not made clear from the start.

12.4.1.1. Present Issues About Assessing Reflection

The issues about the assessment of reflection at present stem from the fact that the triadic relationship between epistemology, pedagogy and assessment of reflection is not explored and is full of incongruity.

To start, the epistemology of reflection is not clear. Chapter Four highlights a few epistemologies from which reflection can be understood and Chapter Seven concludes that reflection does not have a clear epistemology and there are many clashes in epistemic beliefs in the field. The epistemic mess influences the pedagogy of reflection. In a previous paper, I wrote about how the way reflection is being taught can be considered rather rote and reductive:

When students are being taught how to reflect, reflection, itself an esoteric and nebulous concept, can be reduced to getting the student to look back at what the student has done wrong and how he/she can use this evaluation of self-criticism to identify how to do something better in the future. (Wong et al. 2016, p. 476)

Reflective practice can be taught as a method to evaluate one’s practice, however, in doing so, the rich and elaborate process of knowledge construction and reconstruction is lost. Reflective practice becomes performance evaluation and less about one’s growth and understanding of oneself in practice. Such a reductive pedagogical approach could be avoided if the epistemology

was made clearer initially and allowed to influence the way educators teach and the way students learn about it. Johns' (2013) anecdote about his interaction with the nurse cited in Chapter Three made a poignant point. Reflection is being taught unreflectively by unreflective practitioners and educators. This leads to it being perceived pejoratively by students (Russell 2005) and practitioners (Burton 2000; Gilbert 2001).

The assessment in reflection can be treated as an assessment of one's reflection. The aim of assessment in reflection is to judge how one reflects and what one is reflecting on. This assessment of reflection presently is often via reflective assignments, where students submit a written version of their reflection and practice education, where educators grade a student on how he or she demonstrates reflection in practice. Written reflections are a poor representation of the elaborate reflective process that one undergoes.

I find it hard to express myself on paper, particularly with written reflection, I really struggle with it. I find it very superficial because if I am reflecting verbally with somebody or in a conversation with my educator ... as soon as I have been told to write it down, it becomes so bitty. [Eve in group one]

The process of reflection is tacit (Polanyi 1966; Schön 1983), assessing the student's reflection is essentially assessing how well the student can articulate the tacit process of reflection, not the how the student had reflected or what the reflection was about. There is an inherent clash between the assessment method of reflection and the way it is being taught. If reflection was to be taught reductively as a method of practice evaluation then the assessment method should measure how well the student had performed the evaluation, not the extent of the student's expressive ability. To assist in the grading of reflection, complex rubrics have been developed. While grading the level of thinking in the reflection, these rubrics also factored mechanical proficiencies such as spelling, grammar, the structure of the reflection and even the use of citations (Georgia State University 2017; University of Minnesota 2017). These rubrics clearly do not serve to measure what it is created to measure. When students graded on their reflective

ability on placement, this is also assisted by rubrics that guide the educator on what to look out for. In one university, the level of reflective ability is differentiated by the amount of supervision and guidance the student needs on it. Educators then pass a judgement on this via their observation and some educators may choose to ask students to submit written reflection in support of this. The issues surrounding these have been highlighted in Chapter Four.

The idea of assessing a student on reflection is controversial. While it is expected of universities to do so as advised by the professional body (COT 2014b) and the regulatory bodies of higher institutions (QAAHE 2001), the question here is if it is even right to grade one's reflection in the first place. Grading a student's reflection is tantamount to passing a judgement on whether the reflection is good or bad, right or wrong. Assessment becomes about achieving "right answerism" (Knight et al. 2013, p. 77) which then influences the pedagogy of reflection. To help students reflect well as directed by the rubrics, educators teach, and students elicit that reflections should be about utilising reflective models extensively, writing beautifully and demonstrating development by exaggerating the experience. Russell (2005) found that his students were fabricating experiences to reflect on. Demonstrating reflection and reflecting becomes about achieving a better grade (Wong et al. 2016). This makes reflecting excessively academic and less about self-discovery. Symptoms of the *academicalisation* of reflection are the reticence and false reflections as described in Chapter Seven. If the assessment of reflection is grading something false and contrived, then it has clearly failed its purpose.

I remember once when I gave my reflection in, and then she said in the comment, "Oh you're very reflective" and in my head I was thinking: how do you know that I am reflective just by me giving you the paper? [Charlotte in group two]

As Charlotte had remarked, judging reflective ability is more than reading a piece of writing. If reflection were as simple as a skill, then it should be easily assessed, as a skill. However, this is evidently not true. Writing reflection is hard, not to mention the amount of vulnerability that is required to share one's reflection with others. This difficulty is present in dialogic reflection.

Like dialogic reflection, reflection is emotionally charged and morally driven (Johns 2013). It is not a series of logical thoughts and is certainly not always rational. Students make judgements on their actions and experiences based on what they know, feel, value, and perceive. They have their own world versions and so do the educators. Judging someone else's reflection is the same as judging their values, feelings about the experience, knowledge, perspective of the situation; fundamentally, the educator judges the student's world version. The educator extends beyond his or her role of teaching and guiding students to become a referee on the right way to think, act, feel, believe. This can be perceived as over stepping one's responsibility as an educator and even unethical.

From the perspective of the educator, reading and grading someone else's reflection is challenging as well. The following quote is from an educator from Miller et al.'s (2012) work on developing a rubric for assessing reflection:

I found myself forming an opinion about each student based on my own bias about the subject matter, applauding when it was incorporated in the writing and saddened when it was lacking. (Miller et al. 2012, p. 1)

While it is challenging for the student to write a reflection for judgement, it is also difficult for educators to question themselves about their own thoughts of the subject matter when reading the reflection of their students. Reading a reflection also requires one to be open minded enough to accept different opinions about the same subject. Educators face a different challenge here, to put aside their bias and to assess the reflection as one conducted by the student and not contrast how they would have reflected on the same thing themselves. Reading someone else's reflection requires one to enter the world version of the reflector and understand how the reflector had seen the experience. This is something that is challenging, especially so in dialogic reflection. This is even more difficult when educators must attribute a grade to the student's reflection: is the reflection good, bad or is it just a different way of reflecting?

Assessing reflection is problematic, and these issues are shared with dialogic reflection. The issues with reflection in curriculum lie in many areas. The epistemology of reflection is unclear, resulting in many ways reflection is being taught, some more reductive than others. The purpose of assessing reflection is highly questionable and controversial, leading to assessments that defeat their own purposes. Reflection in curriculum requires a complete over haul. To start, the epistemology of reflection needs to be clear before a suitable teaching and assessment plan can follow. In this research, I attempted to avoid a similar fate for dialogic reflection in the curriculum by exploring the epistemology of dialogic reflection in Part Three and then make recommendations for the curriculum with reference to teaching and learning the epistemology in this chapter.

12.4.1.2. How to Assess Dialogic Reflection

The same question needs to be asked about assessing dialogic reflection: what is the purpose of assessment in dialogic reflection? At the same time, the assessment needs to be in line with the pedagogy of dialogic reflection. The earlier discussion about the pedagogy highlighted three ways dialogic reflection can be taught and learned:

1. Theories about dialogic reflection can be taught. Students can be lectured on the principles of dialogic reflection and the underpinning theories and ideas.
2. Students need to learn how to dialogically reflect on their own. For extrospection, the educator can guide and encourage the sharing of experiences and reflection on them.
3. For introspection, students should be given room and the prerogative to pick whom they wish to introspect with, or even introspect on their own.

Students can be assessed on their knowledge on dialogic reflection. If dialogic reflection is taught as a body of knowledge, then it can be assessed as so. Like assignments on other topics taught, students can demonstrate their ability to analyse and synthesise through discursive assignments about the theories of reflection or dialogic reflection. However, this recommendation to

educators comes with a word of caution: the student should not be expected to demonstrate the application of theories through introspection or extrospection, and they should not be rewarded for doing so too. The purpose of this method of assessment is to assess a student's knowledge about dialogic reflection, not how the student reflects. This intention must be made clear to the students for it may be perceived as superior to demonstrate knowledge through application. Obviously, this recommendation restricts the student's expression, that is because the purpose of this form of assessment is limited to knowledge about dialogic reflection and not knowledge about how to dialogically reflect. As I had noted earlier in the discussion on pedagogy, knowledge about dialogic reflection serves little purpose in understanding this epistemology.

Knowledge about how to do something cannot be equated to knowledge about it (Ryle 1945). Knowing about something does not mean that one knows how to carry out the action successfully. There is a common misconception that students need to be taught the theory about a subject before he or she can carry out the application. Ryle (1945) referred to this as the intellectualist legend. He debunks this with the following:

The consideration of propositions is itself an operation the execution of which can be more or less intelligent, less or more stupid. But if, for any operation to be intelligently executed, a prior theoretical operation had first to be performed and performed intelligently, it would be a logical impossibility for anyone ever to break into the circle.
(Ryle 1945, p. 19)

Thinking about the theories before one conducts an action is an action in itself. This results in an infinite regression from which there is no escape hence the intellectualist legend is absurd. Intelligent actions cannot be defined by intelligence (Ryle 1945). Similarly, knowing about all the theories about dialogic reflection does not mean a student knows how to reflect dialogically, hence my claim earlier about teaching dialogic reflection serving little use in the understanding of the epistemology.

The question next is then: what is the purpose of assessing extrospection and introspection? Part of the reason reflection is assessed is that of the requirement of the professional bodies and regulatory bodies. While this is a reason for the reductive treatment of reflection in the curriculum, this requirement is also born from a reductive understanding of reflection. It is because reflection is viewed reductively as practice evaluation that this skill is expected to be assessed, which then leads to it being taught and learned reductively. If this thesis is to maintain that dialogic reflection is an epistemology, then I cannot, in good conscience and with conviction, recommend a method of assessment of dialogic reflection that treats it any less. In fact, in appreciation of its full potential as a way of knowing, I struggle to recommend that dialogic reflection can be assessed in any way or form.

Knowledge about dialogic reflection can be assessed but knowledge about how to dialogically reflect cannot be achieved without first reducing dialogic reflection to a skill or process. While I had suggested earlier that extrospection can be guided and introspection can be encouraged, I had purposely refrained from suggesting that dialogic reflection is to be used as a learning tool. Extrospection, though easier to conduct, cannot be assessed because that would demand the student to think, analyse and conceptualise experience in a certain way that is considered better or more right as the grades would reflect. Assessment here returns back to being about “right answerism” (Knight et al. 2013, p. 77) which then reduces the epistemology to a skill that has certain markers of excellence. Dialogic reflection will then experience the same fate as reflection. Like extrospection, introspection similarly cannot be assessed for the same reason. In fact, like reflection, assessing introspection is unethical.

There is perhaps no need to assess dialogic reflection. The dialogic nature is self-analytical and self-regulatory. It also morally checks reflectors against each other. As such dialogic reflection on its own is a form of its formative assessment. Reflectors question and prompt each other to

achieve a better understanding about their experiences, at the same time point out perspectives that the reflector fails to consider.

12.5. Dialogic Reflection and Reflection in the Curriculum

I made a claim earlier about dialogic reflection possibly being a better way to reflect because of the multiple perspectives it offers which reflection was criticised to lack. In that aspect, dialogic reflection offers something that reflection does not and hence because of that it can be deemed as better, only in that specific aspect. I do not claim that dialogic reflection is superior to reflection because of how dialogic reflection is conceptualised in this thesis. Dialogic reflection can be viewed as an epistemology. While that suggests that reflection can perhaps also be considered as an epistemology, it was not the focus of this thesis and this research.

As with other philosophies, dialogic reflection as an epistemology is something that students can take on board or not if they so wish. Unlike how regulatory bodies have perceived reflective practice, students do not have to be dialogically reflective practitioners, nor should they be forced to apply its principles. Dialogic reflection is not for everyone. Some students may never be able to reveal vulnerabilities to others or trust others enough to reflect dialogically. Students, in fact, trust some people more than others and the best introspective partner is perhaps not from the university or practice setting. Dialogic reflection should be made known to students, the onus is then on them to find what it means to them. Educational institutions should allow students to make this decision themselves by providing them opportunities to engage in it through discussions. Dialogic reflection is a philosophical thought that can be debated, rejected, or accepted, hence students should have this option to do so. Professional bodies and regulatory bodies should recognise this and not expect educational institutions to prove the dialogic reflective abilities of their graduates as this would only lead to a reductive assessment that in turn breeds a reductive understanding of it.

Dialogic reflection can coexist with reflection in the curriculum, it is not an either-or decision that the students must make. Rather the student should decide when, how and where he or she would like to reflect or dialogically reflect, and who to do that with. This decision differs depending on the reflective environment.

Because it is going to depend on what the topic is about, what the experience is going to be about, are the right people in the room, if you are in the right mood to talk about those things, there are just too many variables. [Me in the concluding session]

There are many factors at play that make dialogic reflection suitable for one and as such, reflection can be a more desirable alternative. However, it is not the duty of the educator to make this decision for the student.

Before dialogic reflection can be part of the curriculum, there must be room for it. From the practice education grading system of a university:

Fail grade descriptor: Limited ability to reflect on the problem-solving process to the assessment level despite direction from the educator ... Limited ability to use reflection and educator feedback to evaluate and develop professional strengths and identify continuing learning needs despite direction from the educator.

Distinction grade descriptor: Reflect on the problem-solving process to the assessment level with minimal supervision from the educator ... use reflection and evaluator feedback to evaluate and develop professional strength and identify continuing learning needs with minimal supervision from the educator.

At present, reflecting with someone else and allowing someone else to contribute to one's reflection is deemed as a poorer way to reflect. Dialogic reflection is not supported in the curriculum because it suggests an inability to reflect independently and a need for direction on how to reflect at a deeper level. In light of the findings in this thesis, such a perspective of dialogic reflection needs to be changed.

Another important change required is the reductive perspective of reflection. More research is required to understand the epistemology of reflection and the core nature of reflection. This would allow educators and the professional body to reconsider that is it about reflection that needs to be taught and assessed. Reflection in the curriculum needs to be reviewed. It would then only be safe to introduce dialogic reflection in the curriculum, without fear of it being treated reductively after reflection is being reviewed.

The key point in this exploration is that dialogic reflection must be treated as an epistemology in the curriculum and its pedagogy and assessment should reflect an appreciation of it as such.

12.5.1. Potential of Dialogic Reflection in the Curriculum

With the above conditions satisfied, dialogic reflection can then play an important role in the curriculum besides what it can offer as an epistemology. Dialogic reflection offers students an opportunity to learn from others, socialise into the profession and slow down the pace of curriculum. Additionally, dialogic reflection can play a beneficial role in the students' developing to becoming a professional.

The curricula that my co-researchers were in was rather fast paced. The co-researchers felt that there was little time to socialise and get to know each other. Dialogic reflection in the curriculum will make this possible by slowing down the curriculum.

it was so rushed we did not have a chance to do a reflection unless we had a session to reflect ... [Sarah in group one]

Our course is like you turn up, you do what you need to do and then you go and you don't feel like you have that social support as much. [Isabella in group two]

I remember people saying that they didn't feel like we could talk and have the time for a chat. I don't know where half the people on the course have been, it is especially on this fast-paced course, we don't really get that chance. [Olivia in group two]

Being on a two-year accelerated programme, my co-researchers felt that they had been progressing too quickly from case study to case study in their PBL based modules and from university based modules to practice education and vice versa. There is insufficient time to reflect with others and through dialogic reflection, better understand their peers. Due to this fast-paced curriculum, socialising appears to be secondary to getting the work done:

it's so quick it's more like that is not very important right now and what's important is that the handout gets done. [Olivia in group two]

Aside from professional development, my co-researchers also learn more about each other through engaging in dialogic reflections in this research:

We have done social things and that, but I feel like in these sessions as well, we have got the opportunity to bare ourselves and trust each other more. [Isabella in group two]

I felt a lot closer to the people this year ... I feel a lot more relaxed around people and open. [Lea in group two]

Through the process of engaging in dialogic reflection in this research, the co-researchers had developed a deeper understanding of each other. Dialogic reflection requires a great amount of trust and vulnerability. Through the process of group world making, dialogic reflectors reveal and share their world versions with others. They share their lives, beliefs, values, interest, and that allows dialogic reflectors to have a deeper understanding of each other, not only as students but as all the other social roles they play in their lives. Due to the pace of the curriculum, it is understandable that the co-researchers may think of each other as colleagues. Dialogic reflection in this research offered them an opportunity to learn about each other outside the work capacity and share with others their lives outside the curriculum.

We noted that there is much to learn from others through dialogic reflection:

I think it really makes you think about the way you do things and hearing about how other people might do the same thing from their perspectives. [May in group one]

Having those other perspectives, again it broadens your perspectives and gives you more options. [Sarah in group one]

You know what to do if that were to happen to you or you have an inkling of what to consider if the same thing were to happen to you ... Having eight people in a room reflecting also means eight times more experiences. [Me in group two]

We felt that we learn from someone else's experiences, the choices we had to make and what can be considered. Even though these experiences we reflected on does not always belong to us, we feel that we were able to learn from them as well. With more people reflecting, the variety and amount of experiences each dialogic reflector is exposed to increases. By reflecting on these experiences, we learned from experiences that we did not have the opportunity to experience.

The act of engaging in dialogic reflection itself provides opportunities for my co-researchers to hone professional skills that are transferable to their practice.

Transferable skills because things like building trust than in a group situation or learning to speak out. [April in group one]

You are going to have to give feedback as a professional, perhaps you are going to be mentoring someone or dealing with the staff member. [Alicia in group two]

In addition to learning from others, my co-researchers benefited from the process of dialogic reflection by picking up and practising transferable skills. Dialogic reflection is something that requires trust and tactful communication. By dialogically reflecting, my co-researchers learned to trust and build trust amongst their peers and interact tactfully with others. These skills were deemed of great use in the professional setting as well. Hence dialogic reflection offered them training in professional skills and knowledge in this area.

Reflecting dialogically on placement is rather difficult due to the power dynamics inherently present when students as outsiders enter an organisation for a short period of time. Students

are surrounded by educators and other staff who they find hard to reflect with. While there were issues about introspection, there were fewer issues with extrospection. Some co-researchers found that they could reflect dialogically with other more junior staff members. Dialogic reflections for this purpose tend to be on their practice experience and this had helped them socialise professionally into the placement setting.

I felt like what I was doing wasn't different from what they were doing and, so I discussed stuff with them and they treated me as an equal. [Sarah in group one]

With my supervisor, it feels like she had to listen to what I said but with others, it felt like I was interacting with other members of the team and it makes me feel like I am part of it all as well. [Nicola in group one]

Nicola above explained that reflecting with a supervisor felt like the primary purpose of it was to fulfil the marking criteria. It felt like the responsibility of the supervisor to reflect with her. However, reflecting with other members felt different. Other members were not directly responsible for her learning hence dialogic reflection was more altruistic and nature. She saw it as being appreciated and respected as a member of the team on that placement.

Nonetheless, they were still wary of the ramifications of what they shared.

When I was on placement, they were very encouraging for me to reflect on the wider service and they felt I was in a good position because I could offer those thoughts without the attachment of being employed by the service. But I was very careful because you are still on placement and you are still very vulnerable. [Olivia in the concluding session]

Olivia noted that she felt that the setting could have been making use of her reflections to support the staff's own agenda. She was wary of being made a scapegoat or a proxy for the changes that the staff would like to champion for themselves but powerless to do so. She noted that she erred on the side of caution and was careful in her reflections with the staff members. Gilbert (2001) saw reflections as a form of confession of one's practice. This anecdote above suggested that through this confession, the practitioner inadvertently confesses about the wider

service and staff, revealing problems, inefficiencies and even potentially serve as a form of whistle-blowing. However, this would be the case only if the true reflection was shared and this is rarely the case. Olivia noted that she was careful to edit and filter her reflection, in other words, she offered a false reflection.

It is like dynamics in the placement setting as well ... you have to be really careful what you say in these situations ... you will never get there. [April in the concluding session]

While dialogic reflection socialises the student into the team, there are still power dynamics and politics within the team. As a result, April still saw herself as an outsider just to be cautious.

These two co-researchers showed that even by socialising into the team through dialogic reflection, students are still in vulnerable positions, being an outsider and occasionally the only student on that placement. They remained reticent about matters they reflected on and how they reflected with others. Democratic dialogue, in general, is an issue in placement settings. While non-supervisory staff members can be reflective partners, reticence and the unwillingness to be vulnerable still impede dialogic reflection. Students should be advised to pick their reflective partners carefully on placement.

12.6. Conclusion

Dialogic reflection in the curriculum is a triadic relationship between its epistemology, pedagogy, and assessment. The dialogic reflection is its own epistemology, based on its three key principles. These three key principles should be inherent in the way dialogic reflection is being taught and the way it is assessed in the curriculum. Adopting such a school of thought in considering dialogic reflection in the curriculum, I have concluded that dialogic reflection is tricky to teach and assess.

Dialogic reflection can be taught as a knowledge base, students can be lectured on the theories about it and its principles. Therefore, dialogic reflection can also be assessed as a knowledge

base, through essays and debates. Educators, however, need to be aware that it is the knowledge base they are assessing in these assignments, not the application of them. Students should not be rewarded for demonstrating the application either or faulted for not doing so. If dialogic reflection is to be taught as a body of knowledge, then the assessment should be assessing this knowledge and not the application of the knowledge.

There are many discursive environments available in the university that the educators can use as platforms to encourage and guide dialogic reflection. These discussions are typically about a pre-determined topic or subject. Educators can lead students to extrospect by prompting them to share their experiences in relation to the topic and allow the group to reflect on these experiences together. Introspection on the other is something that the student should be left to conduct on his or her own, with the people that he or she feels comfortable with, and in his or her chosen time and space. It would be impractical and inappropriate for educators to guide introspection unless the student wishes to introspect with the educator.

Extrospection can be initiated simply by asking the group members to share their experiences and allow natural dialogue to encourage reflection on these experiences. Introspection, however, is driven largely by empathy and support, hence it is up to the group to prompt the reflector into deeper introspection and up the reflector to share this process with others. Extrospection and introspection can perhaps be guided by models of reflection however natural dialogue is ultimately preferred. The use of models was not explored in this research as the research groups did not feel that models were useful due to their familiarity with each other and the preference for free, organic reflective discussions. Models may provide some direction and prompts for use in extrospection and introspection and this is something worth further research.

Due to the triadic relationship, I conclude that extrospection and introspection cannot be assessed without reducing them to a skill or method of learning. Dialogic reflection is morally driven, emotionally charged and value based. Assessing dialogic reflection would be tantamount

to passing a judgement on how the student thinks, feel, see, and believe about the experience. While it is not possible to do so without implying that there is a good or bad way to dialogically reflect, it is perhaps even unethical to pass such judgements.

Dialogic reflection has great potential in the curriculum. Students learn not only about themselves through others. They are exposed to experiences that they have not had the opportunity to experience and learn from the mistakes and success stories of others then consider how they would or would not have done something differently. Dialogic reflection slows down the curriculum, such that students can learn more about others, not only as colleagues in the same field of study but as human beings who play many other social roles. Students sometimes find that opportunities to dialogically reflect with others on placement however due to being vulnerable and being an outsider in the team of practitioners, students tend to be cautious about what they share. In the same vein, dialogic reflection is not very suitable for practice education settings, though it is possible.

The crux of this chapter is that dialogic reflection in the curriculum is about it as an epistemology and not as a learning method or technique or practice. Therefore, there are certain constraints on what about dialogic reflection can be taught and assessed. In light of these constraints, dialogic reflection in the curriculum should be viewed as the integration of the epistemology into pedagogy and assessment, such that while students learn more about the subject of study, they also learn more about each other, about themselves and about their world versions.

Chapter 13. Placing Dialogic Reflection in Professional Practice

Apart from benefits of dialogic reflection discussed in the previous chapters, it also plays a crucial role in the professional development for students and practitioners. When on placements students have a strong desire to become professionals and this is also expected of them by universities. However, students do not automatically become professionals just by being on placements. The journey between being a student and becoming a professional practitioner is paved with difficult and conflicting situations where dialogic reflection and reflection become useful. The same desire to become better exists in practitioners as well. The principles of dialogic reflection are important as they play a role in this professional development.

Schön's (1983) work on reflective practice recognised a shift in nature of professional practice, however, the understanding of reflection appears to be less responsive to this reconceptualisation. Considering the findings of this thesis, dialogic reflection needs to be placed in Schön's (1983) paradigm of professional practice and not Technical Rationality. Like the curriculum, dialogic reflection in professional practice needs to be about it as an epistemology, about understanding oneself in one's practice. It is easier to see how extrospection can be part of practice, however, introspection requires a closer inspection of the profession's philosophy.

Introspection is often met with resistance. Action Inquiry provides some direction as to how one can introspect. A pre-reflective mindful state needs to exist to allow one to reflect professionally and personally. However, introspection is something natural in the dialogue between reflectors and hence is not a process that can be simplified or standardised in a model.

Even though this chapter is predominantly a discussion about the application of dialogic reflection in professional practice in occupational therapy, the two research groups had discussed some these applications in the sessions we had. Hence, where appropriate, I share some of our conversations to further support these discussions. Some of the discussion here were part of my initial literature review but I have decided to feature them in this chapter instead because they pertain to application dialogic reflection and provide basis for the recommendations here.

13.1. Professional Development in Occupational Therapy

The challenge of professionalism lies in its acquisition and evaluation which is rather abstract in comparison to practical skills (Fidler 1996; Bossers et al. 1999). Despite addressing multiple aspects of professional development in the curriculum, it is hard to address how to be a professional person (Bruhn 1987). Professional behaviour is not an innate ability and requires practice, support and feedback (Kasar and Muscari 2000). Fidler (1996) identified that professional development in occupational therapy is embedded in experience and closely linked to an individual's values and beliefs; therefore, the learning of professionalism occurs in the context of its natural use in interpersonal engagement (Fidler 1996). In other words, it is Fidler's (1996) understanding that professional development is better learnt when on placement. Placement is intended to provide students with an opportunity to assimilate into the profession (Eraut 1994) and immerse in the culture of practice in that setting (Krusen 2011). Gandy and Jensen (1992) alternatively suggested that group processes such as collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving, coupled with the reflection that bridge theory and practice can facilitate professional development. This is further supported by Alsop (1995a; 1995b) and Crist et al. (1998) who are of the view that the reflective element of portfolios allows for an accurate depiction of the growth of a therapist.

Bossers et al. (1999) had developed framework of professionalism in occupational therapy which comprises of professional parameters, professional behaviours and professional responsibility. Professional parameters refer to the awareness of legal and ethical issues concerning occupational therapy practice. Professional behaviours refer to what the therapist demonstrates in practice settings such as clinical skills and teamwork. Professional responsibility refers to the areas which the therapist is held accountable for such as career and self-development and mentorship of students. While Bossers et al. (1999) had delineated professionalism, they have yet to identify the components that need to be taught (Kelly 1992) and those that develop through experience (Bruhn 1987). Eraut (1994) was of the opinion that professional knowledge can be taught but cannot be gleaned from a manual as it requires more deliberate processes such as planning and problem-solving (Spalding 2000).

Mirroring Erikson's (1982) psychosocial life stages, Kasar and Muscari (2000) had developed a theoretical model for an occupational therapist's progressive stages of professional development: beginning student stage, senior student stage, new graduate occupational therapist – orientation stage, graduate occupational therapist – novice stage, role identification stage, collaborative stage, proficient stage and reflective stage. They had also noted that as with Erikson's (1982) stages each stage has to be successfully completed before moving on to the next. This was contradictory to what they had mentioned later in the beginning student stage about the resolution of the question of "do I want to be an occupational therapist" which they had described as "never completely resolved" (Kasar and Muscari 2000, p. 46) even by a seasoned occupational therapist. The model also suggested that occupational therapists' ability to reflect features very much later after the therapist becomes proficient and ready to take on the responsibility of teaching. One can argue that this conflicts with the understanding that reflective practice should be inherent throughout an occupational therapist's practice life, from being a student to being a mature therapist (COT 2014a). The above critique, with the fact that the model is theoretical and lacks supporting evidence, suggested that this model is not

indicative of the professional developmental process. It, however, further supported that fact that measuring professional development is difficult.

This was further exemplified in the critique of the Occupational Adaptation Model of Professional Development (Garrett and Schkade 1994). The model helped view and facilitate professional development of students by using classes adapted from the occupational adaptation frame of reference (Schkade and Schultz 1992): primitive, transitional and mature classes. Initially, the students demonstrate fear and possibly avoidance of unfamiliar demands. They then transition to demonstrate random responses to changes in the task and fail to respond to the relevant stimuli, and eventually mature to become goal directed and efficient occupational therapists. Kasar and Muscari (2000) were of the view that this model appeared to reflect the development of clinical skills and not professional behaviour which is a broader concept. The model had also been criticised for its poor generalisability to the curriculum outside practice education (Kasar and Muscari 2000; Ledet et al. 2005). Coates and Crist (2004) have replicated the research by Garrett and Schkade (1994) and attempted to use the model to explain performance maturation of the occupational therapy student in the administering of an assessment. In their discussion, Coates and Crist (2004) had achieved partial success with the model, where they had identified that students had developed from demonstrating signs of anxiety and hesitation to becoming more proficient and comfortable but did not report if there was any transition phase as identified by Garrett and Schkade (1994).

Whilst Bossers et al. (1999) had delineated the relevant components of professionalism, there was still an apparent difficulty in measuring and understanding the process of professional development (Coates and Crist 2004; Kasar and Muscari 2000; Garrett and Schkade 1994). However, there was a certain amount of success in the research around demonstrating professional development.

Using theories of experiential learning (Kolb 2014; Henry 1989), Alsop (1995b) had made the case for the use of portfolios as a strategy for occupational therapists to reflect on the experience, identify learning outcomes and document them in a structured way, thereby demonstrating the individual's professional development. This was supported by Crist et al. (1998) who had mentioned that portfolios show in detail how the occupational therapist grew through a reflective process by documenting what and how something was learned.

Despite the difficulty in measuring and understanding professional development, Alsop (1995a; 1995b) and Crist et al. (1998) have both identified that the reflective element of a portfolio is a clear and accurate demonstration of the professional development of an occupational therapist. Evidently, reflection is of great importance to an emerging occupational therapist. The student's ability to reflect critically, being an indicator of development as a professional, will not only show readiness to practice upon qualification but also plot the growth of the therapist from a being a student to a qualified practitioner to becoming an expert in the profession.

13.1.1. Understanding Professional Development Through Dialogic Reflection

Part of this research was to understand the potential of dialogic reflection in the professional development of occupational therapy students. To this end, the research groups had developed a way of understanding professional development using works of Wilcock (1999) and Schön (1983).

Being an occupational therapy student is an ironical position. Even though students are strictly speaking therapists-in-education, when on placement, they are viewed as professionals by others on the placement.

Other professionals, like nurses, they don't treat you like students, a lot of the time, they don't take the time to look at your badge because they just see your uniform. [Eve in group one]

I think it is also the patients as well you want to put on that professional face but often you think like "I have no idea" and you don't want that to come across, you don't want to even though you don't know, but you need to give them that confidence ... you are faking it and you have to in that case. [Sarah in group one]

From these co-researchers' experience, the uniform that students don conveys a sense of professionalism to others on the placement. Service users, their family and staff members perceive a student in the occupational therapy uniform as a professional rather than an emerging professional. The white coat that doctors wear conveys a sense of authority to patients (Wear 1998) hence it is not surprising that the white tunic that some student occupational therapists wear on placement could have the same effect.

Lea succinctly summarised her experience of placement:

You are not qualified, but you are supposed to be acting as if you are qualified. [Lea in group two]

Such expectations placed certain pressures on the students:

... admitting to yourself that you could have done better is not easy. I do it, but it is not nice ... you're are trying to impress on placement too. [April in group one]

We expect ourselves to behave very professionally, but then sometimes you lose sight of the fact that you are still learning, and you forget that you can make mistakes. [Nicola in group one]

My co-researchers believe that being a professional is associated with infallibility and such is the concept of professional practice and their expectations of themselves as student practitioners. This idea of professional practice is problematic in the sense that it leaves very little room for reflective practice to occur. When reflective practice occurs, it is focused on the negative experiences and evaluating practice, rather than understanding oneself. While students expect themselves to practice perfectly, mistakes in practice are viewed with ridicule and disappointment rather than reflective material for development and new understanding to

occur. In addition, Schön (1983) noted that reflective practice is a series of experimental actions that may or may not work. In that sense, to practice reflectively, one has to accept that there are situations where reflection leads to poorer practice, inefficiencies and errors, in other words, less professional and more like a student.

This concept of professional practice by Schön (1983) is different from that of the Occupational Adaptation Model of Professional Development by Garrett and Schkade (1994). Professional development is not a straightforward progression from being a novice to becoming an expert. Instead, professional development is a tango between being a student and becoming a professional; through reflective practice, the practitioner sometimes behaves more like a student and at times more like a professional.

The state of being and becoming is temporal (Wilcock 1999). Being is where one is at present and becoming is where one wants to be potentially (Wilcock 1999). Being an occupational therapy student, there is often a desire to become a professional in the future. Even though professional development may appear to be a back and forth movement between being a student and becoming a professional, there is a propensity for students to develop towards becoming a professional ultimately due to the expectations of them and their desire.

In occupational therapy especially, being a student and becoming a professional is not as clear cut as the quotes have suggested earlier. Students are immersed in professional practice as a part of practice education to facilitate this professional development (Knightbridge 2014). While there are situations where solutions are clear cut, professional practice is often about the “swampy lowlands” (Schön 1983, p. 42) where the practitioner needs to first frame the problem before the solution becomes clearer. These situations are conflicting and perplexing (Dewey 1933) and a reflective conversation needs to be held between the student practitioner and the situation (Schön 1983).

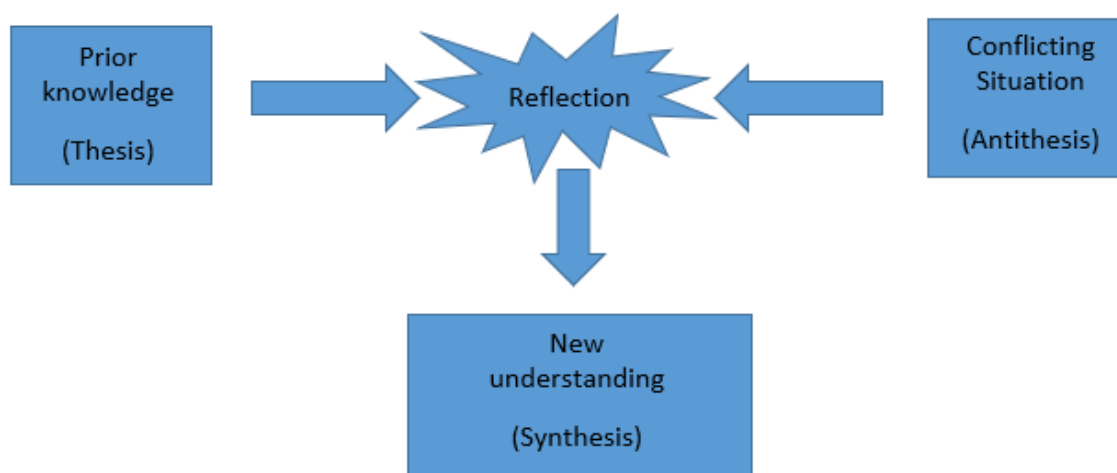


Figure 9. Professional development through dialogic reflection

With reference to the figure nine, this reflective conversation in professional development can be understood as somewhat similar to the triplicity of logic – thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Mueller 1958). A situation in practice is conflicting or perplexing because what the practitioner observes in the situation (antithesis) clashes or is dissimilar to what he or she knows (thesis) (Dewey 1933; Mueller 1958). When this conflict is resolved via reflection, the new understanding (synthesis) does not necessarily mean that the student becomes more of a professional. Reflection does not always lead to doing something better in the future, in fact, it is possible to reflect and become worse at something as the co-researchers had shared in this research.

However, this relationship between what the reflector knows (thesis), what is observed about the situation (antithesis) and what the reflector elicits from the relationship (synthesis) changes in dialogic reflection. In dialogic reflection, the same experience is observed from many viewpoints, at the same time, knowledge about the situation is shared by other reflectors. As the earlier chapters have discussed, this leads to a better understanding of the situation. When different world versions meet to reflect on an experience, the same experience is viewed from these world versions. As group members share their analysis of the experience, they also share their own knowledge about the situation. The new understanding that one elicits from dialogic

reflection is developed from a shared corpus of knowledge in the group, rather than from one's prior knowledge and analysis in reflection. Therefore, this new understanding about one's practice pushes the reflector to become more of a professional and less of a student, with the help of the contribution of the other group members who share a similar desire and expectation to become a more professional practitioner. Hence, for professional development, dialogic reflection can be considered a better way to reflect.

13.2. Dialogic Reflection in a Post-Technical Rational World

Placing dialogic reflection in practice, as an epistemology, is more than considering its contribution to professional development. Schön's (1983) devastating critique of Technical Rationality ushered in a new era for professional practice. While reconceptualising the nature of professions and the problems they deal with, one of Schön's (1983) contribution to professional practice is the dichotomy of experience and knowledge. Major professions in Technical Rationality pride themselves on their own scientific knowledge base which offered solutions to the problems they concern themselves with (Glazer 1974). In Schön's (1983) epistemology of practice, he argued that professionals do not only concern themselves with problems of that nature, they also deal with problems that are unclear and require framing before they seek for a solution for it. These problems require the professional to make use of his or her experience alongside the knowledge that he or she possesses.

When practitioners accept and try to use the academy's esoteric knowledge, they are apt to discover that its appropriation alienates them from their own understandings, engendering a loss of their sense of competence and control. (Schön 1992, p. 120)

This epistemology of practice is popular because there is a shift of emphasis from the application of technical knowledge to everyday practice experiences. This gives the practitioner a certain comfort in knowing that his or her practice experience, which is subjective but real,

can be used as a source of knowledge in his or her practice (Taylor and White 2000). It allows the practitioner to be secure in his or her practice enough to declare “I know so, because of my experience”. It legitimises the dimensions of one’s practice which may sometimes be beyond scientific evidence (Kinsella 2007b). It emancipates the practitioner from being restricted to technical knowledge, granting the practitioner the ability to address problems in practice using his or her experience.

Evidence-based practice in health and care settings is now often used in conjunction with reflective practice (Berrado 2005). This is reflective of Schön’s (1983) dichotomy of technical knowledge and practice experience in his epistemology of practice. As liberating Schön’s (1983) work was, it was also often perceived as confusing and unclear (Kinsella 2009). Practitioners and academics demanded more clarity on how to reflect and what exactly is reflection about. This is a disappointing sight as Schön’s (1983) contribution was an epistemology of practice and not a process or skill of knowing from experience.

Reflective practice in health and care settings can be seen as a reductive appropriation of his epistemology. It was borrowed from his theory to be redefined to now mean the “process of making sense of events, situations and actions that occur in the workplace” (Oelofsen 2012, p. 23). Reflective practice and reflection are often used synonymously to mean a better way of practising. Mackintosh (1998) pointed out that in nursing, ‘reflect’ is used as a prefix for nearly every aspect of practice. In occupational therapy, reflective practice is packaged as a “toolkit for self-directed learning” (RCOT 2017, p. 1).

Currently, placing dialogic reflection in professional practice will be problematic as it may eventually be perceived as a relative of reflective practice, as the profession defines it. This thesis offers dialogic reflection as an epistemology, which can have a place in professional practice like reflective practice. Similar to placing dialogic reflection in the curriculum, reflection needs to be reconsidered by the professional and regulatory bodies.

13.3. Dialogic Reflection in Professional Practice

Discursive environments in the practice setting exist in the form of supervision, team meetings, ward meetings, multidisciplinary meetings, and case conferences. These can involve team members, supervisors, placement educators, students on placement, other practitioners from various disciplines. Society demands a high standard of care and professional practice from practitioners (Beauchamp and Childress 2001), hence dialogically reflecting with service users is not appropriate, nor would practitioners be willing to do so as it implies an uncertainty about his or her practice.

Due to the nature of case conferences, multidisciplinary meetings and ward meetings, there is little room for dialogic reflection to occur. Theoretically, they are suitable for extrospection to take place since they are discussions about an external topic, often about service users. These meetings provide practitioners with the opportunity to share experiences and to reflect (National Cancer Action Team 2010). However, these meetings often have a hierarchy in place and they are highly structured and procedural (National Cancer Action Team 2010) which would affect the degree of democratic dialogue. In addition, the primary purpose of these meetings is for decision making, therefore, reflection and creating new understanding is secondary (Raine et al. 2014). Raine et al. (2014) also reported that practitioners critiqued multidisciplinary team meetings being too parochial for any room for peer assisted learning to occur. While education is sometimes carried out in the form of a multidisciplinary meeting, it usually manifests as quizzing of junior doctors and not reflection (Raine et al. 2014).

Supervision was defined by Hunter and Blair (1999) as:

a process where occupational therapy staff are able to reflect on, critically look at and discuss their work ... (Hunter and Blair 1999, p. 344)

However, while supervision can be reflective, supervision should not be equated to reflection. Barr (1980) noted that in occupational therapy, supervision appeared to be focused on teaching

and monitoring of learning. Such an approach to supervision places excessive power and control on the supervisor over the supervisee, such that there is less room to question and reflect. There is an emphasis on managing tasks, rather than reflecting on practice experiences (Martin 1996). Supervision is sometimes where the supervisee is directed to what the supervisor perceives to be better practice, rather than allowing the supervisee to arrive at what he or she deems to be good practice through reflection.

A co-researcher made the following observation about her team's group reflection on her placement.

On my first placement, there is one evening after five o'clock and then they would have group reflection ... What actually happened was an outside psychotherapist came in and it was like supervision, gave them supervision on cases they were struggling with. So, to me it wasn't a reflection ... they were asking this other professional for their advice. The difficulty is that it's framing it as something that it is actually not. That's my experience. It was called a reflective group, I was expecting lots of things to be flying around but really it was an agony aunt, asking advice so it was like more of a supervision more than a reflection. [Olivia in group two]

As Olivia had pointed out, there is a difference between group supervision and dialogic reflection. The mode of supervision which Olivia pointed out above is what is referred to as a one-to-group supervision (Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland 2010). In such a mode of supervision, the supervisor, who is at a more advanced level of expertise and have more hierarchical authority, discusses issues with the supervisees and leads the group. Apart from peer supervision, one-to-one or one-to-group supervisions are often hierarchical which would lead to issues related to the level of democratic dialogue. Like Olivia had raised, dialogic reflection is not about sharing practice problems and expecting professional advice from a supervisor in return, or the agony aunt situation. Dialogic reflection is about viewing the same experience from different perspectives, where every member shares equal the responsibility in the reflective process.

Hawkins and Shohet (2012) developed a widely used model of supervision in health and care settings. Their model of supervision illustrated the relationship between service user, therapist and the supervisor. It featured a shifting focus from the service user, to the therapist or supervisee and to the supervisor, then finally to the wider context of practice. The focus of this model of supervision was to explore the relationship between these four components in supervision and the interlocking systems connecting the therapist with the supervisor and the therapist with the service user.

Proctor (1986) saw supervision as three interactive components in his model. Supervision could be normative which has a managerial purpose to develop better standards and ensuring compliance with policies and procedures in practice. It could also be educative, being more focused on developing skills and practice. Finally, supervision could also be a form of pastoral support for the supervisee.

An important thing to note is that dialogic reflection, unlike supervision, should not be made deliberate. The motivations for dialogic reflection often is not done primarily to develop practice, rather it is a demonstration of empathy, concern, and support between reflectors, which also drives the dialogue and reflection. While dialogic reflection can contribute to development in the professional setting, it should not be part of one's practice solely for that purpose. Dialogic reflection can be conducted in supervision however it should be seen as a form of pastoral support rather than being educative or managerial (Proctor 1986).

Faugier (1992) saw that supervision should be to facilitate growth in the supervisee in the areas of practice and personal development. The elements that were key in this supervisor-supervisee relationship included trust, sensitivity, thoughtfulness, and openness. Dialogic reflection can fit well in this model of supervision as these elements are congruent to its conditions and key principles. Ideally, this model of supervision creates an environment that encourages the

supervisee to share his or her experience, good or bad, where the supervisor and supervisee share the responsibility of trying to better understand these experiences.

It is also important to note that there is a difference between a reflective supervision and a dialogically reflective supervision. In the former, one party conducts the reflection and in the latter, both the supervisor and supervisee reflect. Dialogic reflection is where every member shares experiences and reflects. This is key to building trust and developing the group world where reflectors can challenge each other and prompt each other into deeper reflection. In supervision, especially in the educative or managerial model (Proctor 1986), the supervisee relies on the supervisor for advice and direction. In dialogic reflection, while the supervisor provides advice, he or she has to be open to receiving advice from the supervisee. This can be seen as the supervising the supervisor to a certain extent. Due to this, there is a difficulty in fitting dialogic reflection in a model that encourages a pronounced power differential between the supervisor and supervisee. While the educative and managerial modes of supervision are important, it is perhaps useful to place an equal focus on the supportive mode of supervision such that dialogic reflection can be carried out.

Olivia had noted the following thought about the supervisory relationship on her placement:

It's a learning experience to the educator as well so it should, to a certain extent ... maybe we should be seeing that as sort of a two-way process, like we are developing them and their educator skills and we are developing our skills as practitioner skills. [Olivia in group two]

Supervising a student on placement can also an opportunity for the supervisor to develop his or her educator skills. While it may be difficult for a supervisor to share negative practice experiences with a supervisee, perhaps it would be easier for the supervisor to dialogically reflect with the student on his or her experiences of being an educator rather than being a practitioner.

It would be interesting to see that and how students encouraged educators to think more flexibly, you think as an occupational therapist she would be able to view things from people's perspective ... [Olivia in group two]

If one were to view supervising a student or subordinate as an educational practice, then there is room for the supervisor to practice reflectively as well, as an educator or a supervisor or manager. The question supervisors need to ask is whether they would be willing to reflect with a supervisee or student, someone who is often viewed as a subordinate in that relationship. If supervisors are unwilling to do so then dialogic reflection is not appropriate in that supervisory relationship. For the same reason, it is perhaps easier to dialogically reflect in a peer-to-peer supervision setting.

13.3.1. Professional Introspection in Practice

Extrospection is perhaps easier in practice, where practitioners reflect externally on their practice. The aim of the dialogic reflection here is to better understand one's practice and to receive some indication of areas of practice where the practitioner can further develop. The reflection remains on a topic external to the self, hence there is less need for vulnerability relative to introspection.

My co-researchers and I believe that introspection exists in two forms: professional introspection and personal introspection. Professional introspection is where the practitioner reflects on his or her practice philosophy and develops a better understanding of himself or herself as a practitioner. Personal introspection is where the practitioners reflects on his or her personal philosophy of life, and better understands himself or herself in the world. This dichotomy was built on the premise that the beliefs that one carries in one's practice may not always be the same as that in one's life, similarly, one's personal values may not be evident in one's practice.

Maybe there are two levels of introspection, almost like you before you were an OT, your very personal self that can creep into practice that you have to bracket, to put aside or

be aware of. And then there are things that are inherent in you through your training, the way you were taught to practice, i.e. person centred, holistic, occupationally focused, meaningful, we are taught those through training ... sometimes I do question the stuff that we are taught. I don't know if I believe in them completely. [Olivia in the concluding session]

Olivia had noted a dissonance between her occupational therapy practice and what she believed in. In my further reading on this, I had found more debate and discussion about this in the fields of social work and nursing. This is perhaps indicative of some congruence between professional and personal values in occupational therapy and a more profound incongruence in other health and social care professions (Rassin 2008; Comartin and González-Prendes 2011; McDaid 2016).

Rassin (2008) noted that in the nursing profession,

Nursing professionals, following trends set by society, search for convenience, economic stability, power, and control, waiving professional values such as altruism and equality. Rapid advances in technological knowledge have led to drastic changes in the health professions. Today, more than ever, there is a conflict between personal, professional, institutional, and social values (Rassin 2008, p. 614)

The dissonance in professional and personal values developed due to changes in the person, society and the nursing profession. McDaid (2016), however, noted that personal values change as the individual develops. Professional values, on the other hand, are not personal to the individual. They aim to create a professional culture (Dominelli 2004), which is less elastic to changes in comparison relative to personal value systems. Therefore, this dissonance may develop anytime in one's professional career.

Comartin and González-Prendes (2011) cited an example in their paper where one of the authors' feminist values conflicted with the values espoused by the social work profession. It was an ethical dilemma where the author had chosen to bracket her personal beliefs and to follow the values of the profession. The author had noted this to be a choice she had to make despite the hurt and anger she experienced. Also from the field of social work, McDaid (2016)

cited an incident where his personal deontological ethics conflicted with the social work policies and procedure on the provision of care for children, which he deemed as utilitarian. A similar dilemma between personal deontological ethics and professional policy was raised in a dialogic reflection session in this research.

I think is also difficult in children services in paediatrics, it would be different again if the parents refuse treatment, not in the best interest of the child because it would be neglectful, what does the code say about that? It probably says something contradicting, so I think parent have a parental responsibility haven't they, so if they say I don't give consent you can go against that because it is child protection as well isn't it? [April in group one]

While these examples are only vignettes of a potentially wider issue in professional practice, they demonstrated that there are indeed cases where professional philosophy and personal life philosophy may diverge, or even clash. It is, therefore, necessary to differentiate professional introspection into oneself in one's practice from personal introspection into oneself in one's life.

Wilcock (2000) noted that while occupational therapists may have their personal views about the importance of occupations in life, this is often dominated by the philosophy of health from the medical viewpoint.

This has resulted in ready acceptance of altered forms of practice and extreme adaptability according to changes in medicine, but not necessarily a strong stance concerning the occupational health needs of people. (Wilcock 2000, p. 79)

This could a reason as to why a clash between personal and professional philosophy is not much of a debate in the occupational therapy profession. Nonetheless, this does not indicate less of a need to introspect professionally and personally. The understanding of one's philosophy is important in the evaluation of the profession's philosophy (Wilcock 2000; Fish and Boniface 2012), as it distinguishes one as a reflective professional from a worker who simply applies or does what one is told.

13.3.2. The Need for Professional Introspection in Occupational Therapy

“Occupation for health” (Wilcock 2000, p. 82) is the philosophy of the profession, and this is evident in the way the international professional body, WFOT, had defined the profession:

Occupational therapy enables people to achieve health, well-being and life satisfaction through participation in occupation. (WFOT 2013, p. 48)

Wilcock (2000) noted that the profession’s philosophy should be simple enough to accommodate the changes in personal philosophies and development of ideas in research and practice. However, “occupation for health” (Wilcock 2000, p. 82) is far from being a simple philosophy as Wilcock (1998) might have made it seem. There is a need for practitioners to conduct professional introspection. In fact, this should be a need regardless of which profession one is in.

All health and social care professions share similar ethical values and the same fundamental purpose: to help people achieve a good life (Carr 2000). Social workers provide social counselling to service users, giving careful consideration of their welfare and social justice. By the treatment of psychiatric disorders, psychologists help those in need gain autonomy over their psyche. Doctors cure and alleviate pain, providing better health. All these are done with the aim of achieving a good life (Dige 2009).

As understood from the definition offered by WFOT, occupational therapists help service users achieve a good life through activity and participation. Though it may vary for each profession, the concept of a good life is understood in occupational therapy as being of good health, well-being, and life satisfaction. The theories of occupational therapy practice are built upon the understanding that a life imbued with activity and participation is relatively more fulfilling than one that is sedentary and passive (Kielhofner 1997; Dige 2009; Sumison et al. 2011). Research on the positive impact of activity and participation on health (Edwards et al. 2006; Doble et al. 2003; Ayele et al. 1999; Steinkamp and Kelly 1987), life satisfaction (Janssen et al. 2010;

Warburton et al. 2006) and well-being (Adams et al. 2011; Ussher et al. 2007; Litwin and Shiovitz-Ezra 2006) is in abundance. Well-being is often understood as a state of contentment; however, this is not a satisfactory explanation as it alludes to hedonism where vices such as drugs are deemed acceptable in the good life. In fact, according to Joseph Raz (2004), well-being, requires the “wholehearted and successful carrying out of valuable activities” (Dige 2009, p. 92). This theory of achieving well-being sits very comfortably in the profession’s philosophy of a good life.

Participating in activities is insufficient as some activities can be trivial in terms of what is achieved through them and their meaning to the individual. Raz (2004) indicated that activities have to be valuable to contribute to a better well-being which is perfectly congruent to the profession’s understanding of the word “occupation”. Occupation is defined by the RCOT (COT 2015) as

A group of activities that have personal and sociocultural meaning, is named within a culture and supports participation in society. (COT 2015, p. xiii)

Nonetheless said meaning is rather subjective for the value of an activity is necessarily linked to one’s inherent values which are dependent on one’s unique experience of life and knowledge (COT 2015).

Whilst it is important to have activities that one finds meaningful, the profession also values the ability to participate in them. According to Raz (1996), participation needs to be successful and wholehearted. Success is inextricably linked to challenge. The degree of successful participation in any occupation is dependent on the nature of the challenge it poses to the individual (Dige 2009).

Participation also needs to be wholehearted (Raz 2004). The profession understands participation as doing something with sincerity or enthusiasm or commitment which is closely linked to the value or meaning of the occupation to the individual. If an activity is of great value

to a service user, it can be inductively reasoned that he/she will participate with more enthusiasm and commitment.

People are intrinsically active and creative, needing to engage in a balanced range of activities in their daily lives in order to maintain health and wellbeing. (COT 2014b, p. 2)

The profession is of the understanding that the wholehearted and successful participation in meaningful activities is important to health and wellbeing of the individual. Therefore, the purpose of the occupational therapy profession is to enable the service user to participate in activities that are meaningful to him or her, thereby achieving a good life.

Though Wilcock (2000) had summarised the professional philosophy in three words, the professional philosophy is far more profound than those words. Professionals need to examine and evaluate how these professional values relate to one's personal values (Wilcock 2000). In cases of conflict, the practitioner is the one who has to make the choice as to whether to follow one's professional values or personal values as the earlier vignettes have suggested (Comartin and González-Prendes 2011; McDaid 2016), therefore professional introspection is immensely crucial to one's practice. Similarly, personal introspection is important in practice for this reason. Kasar and Muscari (2000, p. 56) had noted that "do I want to be an occupational therapist" is a question that a practitioner constantly asks himself or herself. I believe there is a preceding and equally perpetual question that practitioners need to address through introspection: Who am I as an occupational therapist?

13.3.3. Introspection Through Mindful Practice

Torbert's (2001) concept of first person Action Inquiry, where one conducts an enquiry into oneself, is similar to the concept of introspection. He believed one's life is situated around the lives of others, hence an enquiry into one's life should be done with others. He noted that to do such an enquiry, one needs to be present in one's experiences of professional and personal lives.

Introspection is not easy because “we rarely remember to do so” also, “we don’t really know what to do when we do remember” (Torbert 2001, pp. 207–208).

We rarely experience ourselves as present in a wondering, inquiring, ‘mindful’ way to our actions ... As much as we may like the idea of action inquiry, we rarely actively wish to engage subjectively in first-person research/practice in the present. (Torbert 2001, p. 208)

Introspection is sometimes resisted by one because it is painful and complex (Dewey 1933) when one conducts an enquiry into one’s professional and personal self. Additionally, as Torbert (2001) pointed out, it is not often one is present in one’s experience such that one can reflect.

The problem of being present in one’s practice is a problem for some.

... this particular patient is quite difficult, my brain automatically goes on to all the issues that surround that person, so how they got here in the first place, what happened, why are they like this, what were they like when they were younger... [Alicia in the concluding session]

April noted in reply,

Rather than being in the moment ... If you think about your situation, do you need to think about what happened to that patient’s past or perhaps you need to be thinking about who this person is today, what am I actually doing with this person rather than “oh what happened when he was younger” and all. [April in the concluding session]

In this discussion, Alicia pointed out she is naturally very reflective, to the point where April noted that she could have been “in the moment” instead of wondering about issues that may not be beneficial to one’s practice. Other co-researchers have echoed the similar experiences of being occupied with other thoughts rather than being present in their engagement with the experience, in both the personal and professional milieu.

I noted in the same discussion that,

The more present you are in that experience, you possibly have more to reflect upon, because you are more attuned to what you are thinking and feeling and what you actually saw and observed so they become better reflective materials later. [Me in the concluding session]

Being present or more aware of oneself in the experience possibly allows one to have better access to one's internal faculties at the point of reflection. Epstein's (1999) work advances the idea of mindful practice in the medical profession. He believes that mindfulness is a precursor to reflection, corroborating with Johns' (2013) work. Supporting my above contribution to the discussion, Epstein wrote:

Mindful practitioners attend in a non-judgemental way to their own physical and mental processes during ordinary, everyday tasks. This critical self-reflection enables physicians to listen attentively to patient's distress, recognise their own errors, refine their technical skills, make evidence-based decisions and clarify their values so that they can act with compassion, technical competence, presence and insight. (Epstein 1999, p. 833)

Epstein (1999) argued that mindful practitioners being more acutely aware of their practice experience are more reflective. In fact, he believed that the mindful practitioner is also a reflective practitioner.

However, this is not to say that one should halt all thoughts during the experience if that is even possible. A co-researcher pointed out that there is an inherent contradiction between being mindful of one's practice and Schön's (1983) reflection-in-action. If mindful practice were to mean that a practitioner is to be acutely aware of his or her observations and actions, they themselves may serve as a distraction from the reflection that needs to occur in the space and time of the experience to respond swiftly to changes in the situation. Because of this, the co-researchers cautioned that the practitioner needs to decide what is worth reflecting or thinking about in the experience.

13.3.4. Prompting Introspection

Empathy and compassion inherently drive introspection hence reflectors in a dialogic reflection naturally prompt each other in their dialogue to introspect. A co-researcher noted that introspection can be prompted simply by turning the focus from understanding the external experience to understanding oneself, similar to how I had prompted introspection as discussed in the previous chapter.

Maybe that is where you need some prompting, say "has this reflection made you think about anything about yourself?" [April in the concluding session]

I concluded that it is natural, empathetic dialogue that drives introspection beyond this prompt and it is not something that can be directed by a model, not in the dialogic sense.

Similar to introspection in the curriculum, the practitioner needs to find his or her reflective partner to introspect with. While this is something that can be done in supervision if the reflector considers the supervisor to be a suitable reflective partner, the practitioner should not be pressured or expected to reflect introspectively in supervision. Introspection is a deeply internal process and the practitioner needs to be granted the autonomy to make this self-discovery, for himself or herself. Alternatively, if dialogic reflection is not possible, the reflector may choose to introspect as in a reflective monologue.

13.4. Conclusion

Professional development is important to all professions however it is hard to measure or evaluate. In occupational therapy, some theorists have noted that the reflection is a good indication of development, however, there are issues with reflecting for professional development. It perpetuates a negative culture about reflection that treats it reductively as a method of growth and evidence of it.

Occupational therapy students are motivated to become professionals that they sometimes perceive themselves more as practising qualified professionals than students. Between this journey from being a student to becoming a professional, students face countless conflicting situations which can be negotiated with reflective practice. However, reflection does not always mean one always grows towards becoming a professional and there are occasions where one regresses towards being a student. Dialogic reflection aids this professional development of students by supplementing their reflections with perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of other reflectors. This provides the student with a better understanding of the experience and hence pushes the student closer to becoming a professional.

Dialogic reflection in professional practice needs to move away from Technical Rationality. It needs to be appreciated as an epistemology, that can be used to understand one's practice experiences. The role dialogic reflection plays in practice is beyond rationalising the practitioner's decision making process and complementing evidence-based practice with practice experience. Dialogic reflection can be part of many discursive settings in practice. Supervision is a good place to dialogic reflect if the mode of supervision is supportive. This is also dependent on the supervisory relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. Supervision is only dialogically reflective if the supervisor is willing to reflect on himself or herself with the supervisee. This is a position that is not easy to reconcile for the supervisor.

Similar to dialogic reflection in the curriculum, the reflector needs to introspect with someone he or she is comfortable with being vulnerable and trusts. A pre-reflective state of being present in one's experience is important prior to conducting introspection in the professional and personal setting. In practice, introspection into the professional philosophy is important as it is more complex than it appears. One needs to introspect professionally and personally to evaluate where one stands in relation to the professional values that the profession espouses. Doing so

elevates one to a professional status, rising beyond being a problem solver dwelling in Technical Rationality to become deeply reflective and critical practitioner.

Chapter 14. Conclusion

This research was an exploration of the suitability of dialogic reflection for occupational therapy students in their professional development. Two action research groups, comprising of occupational therapy students and me, were set up for this enquiry. We met regularly for a total of fifteen sessions over one year and one month to develop a theory about dialogic reflection, to understand its value in the occupational therapy curriculum and suggest ways of embedding dialogic reflection into the curriculum.

Trustworthiness and reflexivity in this research were ensured mainly by maximising the involvement of my co-researchers where possible. Their participation, along with mine, in the analysis, data collection, development of the methodology and deep reflections about the topic implied that the theory generated in this research is grounded in all of our experiences and knowledge. This research was a meta-dialogic reflection and because of this, we were constantly challenging each other's preconception, perspective, and worldview and we were acutely aware of how we had influenced the research. As dialogic reflectors, we are individual knowers and enquirers. We understood the same experiences in our own ways and from our own perspectives, because of our unique world constructions.

Dialogic reflection is similar to experientialism. Appendix L expands further on dialogic reflection by exploring its ontological arguments. Like experientialism (Johnson and Lackoff 1992), the objective nature of the world is not of concern because dialogic reflection is always on experience, which will always carry emotional, moral, and intellectual elements to it (Dewey 1934). Only the subjective nature of the world can be understood and reflected upon therefore dialogic reflection takes a subjective ontological perspective. Considering this subjective ontology, this research was not about achieving consensus. Rather, it was about presenting how

my co-researchers and I have understood dialogic reflection. In this thesis, I present a way dialogic reflection can be theorised, but I am not arguing that it is the only way of understanding dialogic reflection. This is evident in the fact that Glazer et al. (2004), Tigelaar et al. (2008) and my co-researchers and I have developed different theories of dialogic reflection.

Another limitation of the study is the nature of collaboration itself. Heron and Reason (1997) argued that complete collaboration is rare in the participatory paradigm. True collaboration, where all the co-researchers are involved in the writing and sharing of the research (Lincoln 1997), was not practical in this research. This was because the research had different meanings for all of us involved. Therefore, this research was co-operative to a certain extent, where we collaborated on the methodological and analytical elements but not in the writing or sharing of the research. This is further expanded on in Appendix J, where I discuss the limitations of collaboration.

In this thesis, I presented that dialogic reflection can be conceptualised as a way of knowing that rests on three key principles:

1. Mediating theory and practice with values
 - a. Dialogic reflection is a process of enquiry that is emotional and value-based.
Through this, reflectors better understand their experience and their personal and professional philosophies.
2. Democratic dialogue
 - a. Dialogic reflection is emancipatory. It requires reflectors to be honest and open to share their experiences and knowledge, and to be willing to be challenged and questioned by others. As this is largely motivated by empathy and genuine concern, dialogic reflection requires a huge amount of trust and vulnerability.
3. Reflectors are knowers and enquirers

- a. Individuals in dialogic reflection have their own perspective of the world. They bring to the group their unique knowledge, experience, and value system. Despite being in a collaborative environment, reflectors are appreciated as unique individuals and they are valued for their contribution to the multiple perspectives in the reflections.

These key principles of dialogic reflection are inherent in the four main findings of this research.

1. There are issues about reflection and dialogic reflection that stem from the epistemic level. Because they are understood differently by individuals, there is some confusion about the concepts. In addition, reflection is a nebulous and painful process, yet it is sometimes used as a learning tool or evidence of professional development. This becomes problematic when it is being assessed in education and monitored in professional practice. Therefore, to resolve this confusion, dialogic reflection needs to be understood at the epistemic level.
2. Dialogic reflection is an approach to enquiry that is preferably unstructured and unfacilitated. This allows for a natural form of enquiry about one's experience that is multi-dimensional but also highly analytical. It validates organic, empathetic dialogue as an intellectual way to analyse experience develop knowledge.
3. The value of dialogic reflection lies in the multiple perspectives offered by the individual reflectors. This is only possible through developing a protective environment where reflectors can trust each other enough to reveal their vulnerabilities.
4. In addition to the intellectual aspect, dialogic reflection also embraces the emotions and values in the experience. It explores the experience as a whole. Therefore, it is an artistic way of understanding the world. It also allows one to morally check oneself against the moral constructs of others.

In light of these findings, I offered the following definition of dialogic reflection.

Dialogic reflection is a theory of knowledge. It argues that individual knowledge about the world can be elicited from a co-operative exploration of experience. It is an artistic method of enquiry about the world that embraces multiple perspectives and vulnerability.

Furthermore, we argued that dialogic reflection exists in two forms: extrospection, where members reflect on a topic external to themselves, and introspection, where members reflect internally on themselves.

14.1. Recommendations

I provided the following recommendations for embedding dialogic reflection in the curriculum.

1. It is imperative that dialogic reflection is treated as an epistemology in education, not merely as a learning tool or problem-solving method.
2. Theories about dialogic reflection can be taught but students cannot be taught how to do so.
3. While learning about dialogic reflection is useful, students should learn how to do so by practising it and creating a personal understanding of where it fits in their life.
4. The main role of the educator should be to encourage and guide dialogic reflection.
 - a. Educators can turn discursive settings into an extrospection by prompting students to talk about their experiences in relation to the topic of discussion.
 - b. Introspection can be prompted by asking student what they have elicited from an experience, using the second person pronoun.
5. Students should be empowered to decide who to introspect with, when, where and what to introspect on. Educators should provide students time and opportunity to do so in the curriculum.
6. Educators should not imply that reflecting with others is a demonstration of inability and dependency.

7. Dialogic reflection should not and cannot be assessed.

Dialogic reflection is important in occupational therapy practice because of the professional development it engenders. More importantly, it encourages practitioners to introspect on their professional philosophy and personal philosophy and how they relate to each other. In professional practice, I recommended the following:

1. To encourage extrospection in supervision, the supervisor should be willing to share his or her vulnerabilities and difficulties in practice by reflecting honestly with the supervisee.
2. The practitioner should find his or her reflective partner for introspection.
3. The practitioner should introspect on his or her professional philosophy and personal philosophy.
4. To prevent dialogic reflection from becoming a tool for professional development, the professional body should regard them as a way of understanding oneself in one's practice, rather than evidence of growth or a measure of competence.

Even though this research was conducted in the context of occupational therapy, I believe that dialogic reflection has its application in other fields, and beyond education or professional practice because we conceptualised it at the epistemic level. As an epistemology, dialogic reflection should be something that the practitioner or student chooses to believe in, rather than *have to* follow. This prevents dialogic reflection from being understood reductively. Practitioners and students who wish to dialogically reflect should similarly see it for something that serves beyond the purposes of improving practice or learning.

The findings of this research are significant because of their impact on the following groups:

1. For occupational therapy students and practitioners, the findings validate the issues that they may have faced in their own reflective practice. In addition, this thesis offers

them a way of engaging reflectively in their own practice, one that they may have already been conducting unknowingly. Most importantly this research highlights the importance of reflecting with others to further develop practice that is morally sound, well-justified and empathetic.

2. For educators, the findings of this research reveal that there are issues in the way reflective practice is being taught and assessed and they have a negative impact on the students' understanding of reflective practice. This thesis offers educators a different approach to educating reflective practitioners, one that is truer to the nature of dialogic reflection. Another key message to educators is that if they wish for students to reflect with them, then they will have to be willing to offer their own reflections, be vulnerable and open minded to the students' input in their reflections.
3. For RCOT and HCPC, this thesis argues that reflective practice is not always evident in the written reflections that they expect from their registrants. Rather than using written reflection as an indicator of reflective practice and professional development, the RCOT and HCPC should find these elements in the reflective interactions that practitioners engage in with their supervisors, peers and with other professionals. Due to the difficulty of monitoring, the RCOT and HCPC should see dialogic reflection as a way practitioners can develop knowledge about themselves and their practice. While it remains a tenet of professional practice, it is not something that can be accurately expressed or monitored. However, there should be room for it to occur and it should be encouraged in practice via supervision or whichever means the practitioner prefers. While this thesis is contextualised within the occupational therapy field, I recommend all healthcare professional and regulatory bodies to similarly reconsider their position on monitoring reflective practice.

Dialogic reflection is a way for one to develop a greater understanding of oneself and one's personal philosophy of life. It is something that most people already engage in because of how

natural it is. I recommend that everyone continues to dialogically reflect while being aware of this epistemology and pay closer attention to what one is reflecting on and what is one learning about oneself.

14.2. Further Research Recommendations

This thesis is a beginning to a different way of understanding the world. Hence, there are many areas where further research can aid in our understanding of this epistemology and its applications:

1. Models of reflection may be helpful in initiating and guiding extrospection; however, they are often theorised to be used in a monologic way. Hence more research is required to explore the use of these models of reflection in the dialogic environment and adapting these models for extrospection.
2. Since dialogic reflection is a method to enquiry, it is perhaps also applicable as a research method that can be used to enquire about topics, particularly in social science research. Research in this would provide us with a method of data gathering and analysis that is grounded in the experiences and knowledge of its participants: the researchers who are also the researched.
3. More research, or rather more dialogic reflection needs to be carried out to better understand the philosophical position of dialogic reflection in ontology, axiology and ethics and how it relates to other philosophical ideas.

14.3. Now, Where Do I Go from Here?

This research played a rather significant role in my development as a researcher and as a knower and enquirer about the world. I have never questioned, doubted, reflected, and dialogically reflected on myself, my knowledge and experience as intensely as I had the past few years. Writing this thesis was exhilarating yet sorrowful as it marked an end to a research into a topic

that I am deeply passionate about. However, at the same time, it is a new beginning for me, for now, I am aware of how I can understand the world through a different lens.

Publications from this research can be found at the end of the thesis. Even though this thesis is focused on the application of dialogic reflection in the educational and professional environment, I am convinced that it has a greater and wider application in our lives beyond these settings. I feel responsible for taking this epistemology into the wider community and to teach it, or rather let others learn about it.

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Appendix A: Literature Review Method

The purpose of this literature review was to explore the nature of reflection and dialogic reflection and how it is of benefit or could be of benefit to the professional development of occupational therapy students. As the dialogic method of reflection is not widely theorised unlike the monologic form of it, I had to synthesise a theory about it using literature from a diversity of disciplines such as psychology (Barbera 2009; Rowe 2013), education (Glazer et al. 2004; Tigelaar et al. 2008; Janssen et al. 2008; Hanson 2011) and health sciences (Gilbert 2001; Kember et al. 2001; Kinsella 2001; Boniface 2002; Clouder and Sellars 2004; Barry and Gibbens 2011). My initial theory was important as it informed my initial thoughts on dialogic reflection and thus my participation in the action research later. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this research sought to explore dialogic reflection through experiencing it, hence some prior knowledge and assumptions were important to initiate the research.

Hence, to achieve this, a structured method of reviewing literature, Critical Interpretive Synthesis, was used initially. However, mid-review, this method was deemed unsuitable for various reasons. A more reflective approach to the theory synthesis was used. Nonetheless, Critical Interpretive Synthesis was useful as it provided a launch pad for the later stages of the review.

Critical Interpretive Synthesis

Critical Interpretive Synthesis is an adaptation of the methods used in meta-ethnography and grounded theory to generate theory from a combination of literature from various sources (Dixon-Woods et al. 2006, p. 35). While some literature review methods focused on aggregating

and compiling findings, Critical Interpretive Synthesis is focused on interpreting literature and aims to develop new concepts through an iterative process of reviewing and synthesising literature (Heaton et al. 2012).

The intention to use Critical Interpretive Synthesis was based on the structured approach towards generating a theory from the literature it offered. It was expected that the iterative approach would be useful in exploring a broad topic such as dialogic reflection which had little research in the health and social care context. The line-of-argument method used in the synthesis of searched literature was also expected to inform the generation of the theory (Dixon-Woods et al. 2006), which would in turn be used to inform the action research later.

The review question was formulated such that it was inclusive enough to not place excessive limits on the amount of information collected (Bales and Gee 2013). Due to its aim to generate a theory, there was a need for the review to be broad enough such that it allowed room to explore concepts that concern the emergent theory. The development of the theory was directed by the literature and not guided by the boundaries of the review (Dixon-Woods et al. 2006). I used my research question as the initial review question: how suitable is collaborative reflection for occupational therapy students in their professional development? The keywords “collaborative reflection”, “occupational therapy students”, “professional development” have been searched in Medline and AMED databases. The search string is shown below.

1. Collaborat*.mp
2. Reflect*.mp
3. 1 and 2
4. “Collaborative reflection”.mp
5. Occupational therap*.mp
6. 3 and 5
7. Student*.mp
8. 6 and 7
9. “profession* develop*”.mp
10. 4 and 9
11. “professional development”.mp
12. 5 and 11
13. 5 and 9

14. 2 and 13

15. 7 and 12

As there is no hierarchy of study designs for qualitative research, I prioritised key papers that specifically discussed or researched dialogic reflection over other papers that mentioned it as part of a wider or separate topic. These key papers provided direction for the theory generation whilst the other papers provided supporting evidence or raised areas of conflicts that may be of interest (Dixon-Woods et al. 2006). The assessment of the quality of papers as recommended by Dixon-woods et al. (2006) was twofold: papers that were methodologically flawed were excluded, then papers were judged on how credible they were and their degree of contribution to the emergent theory. I found this step hard to follow since most of the papers I had found were theoretical papers or literature reviews. Most of the research papers were not very specific about their methods hence it was hard to make a judgement. Instead, I only excluded papers that were unrelated to the topic. Out of a hundred and eleven papers from the search, eighty-six papers were excluded after I read their abstracts and titles, on grounds of relevance to research question and duplication. Twenty-five papers were included. From the twenty-five papers, another twenty-five papers were reference chained. At this stage, there were a total fifty articles that emerged from the first literature search using the initial review question. Following Dixon-Woods et al.'s (2006) recommendations, I also added eighty-one articles from my own library of literature drawn from my previous dissertation and preliminary review of the topic. I had one hundred and thirty-one papers in total by this stage of the literature review.

Papers included in the review were then reviewed using lines-of-argument synthesis (Dixon-Woods et al. 2006). It involved the construction of a more elaborate theory grounded in the findings of separate studies. Papers were analysed for the following (Schutz 1962; Noblit and Hare 1988; Dixon-Woods et al. 2006):

- First order constructs, which were information in the paper relating to theoretical understanding of the subject;

- Second order constructs, which were explanation and theories used by authors in the primary study reports;
- Third order constructs, which were original concepts transformed by the author using the first and second order constructs.

A theory about dialogic reflection was then generated using all the above constructs. According to Dixon-woods et al. (2006), as the theory developed, new areas of the theory required further review emerged. Hence the search for literature would have been continuous. This iterative review process would have continued until no more new information is found and the theory stopped generating new areas of interest. However, for my own literature review, six topics emerged from literature and twenty further review questions had been raised. These questions can be found below.

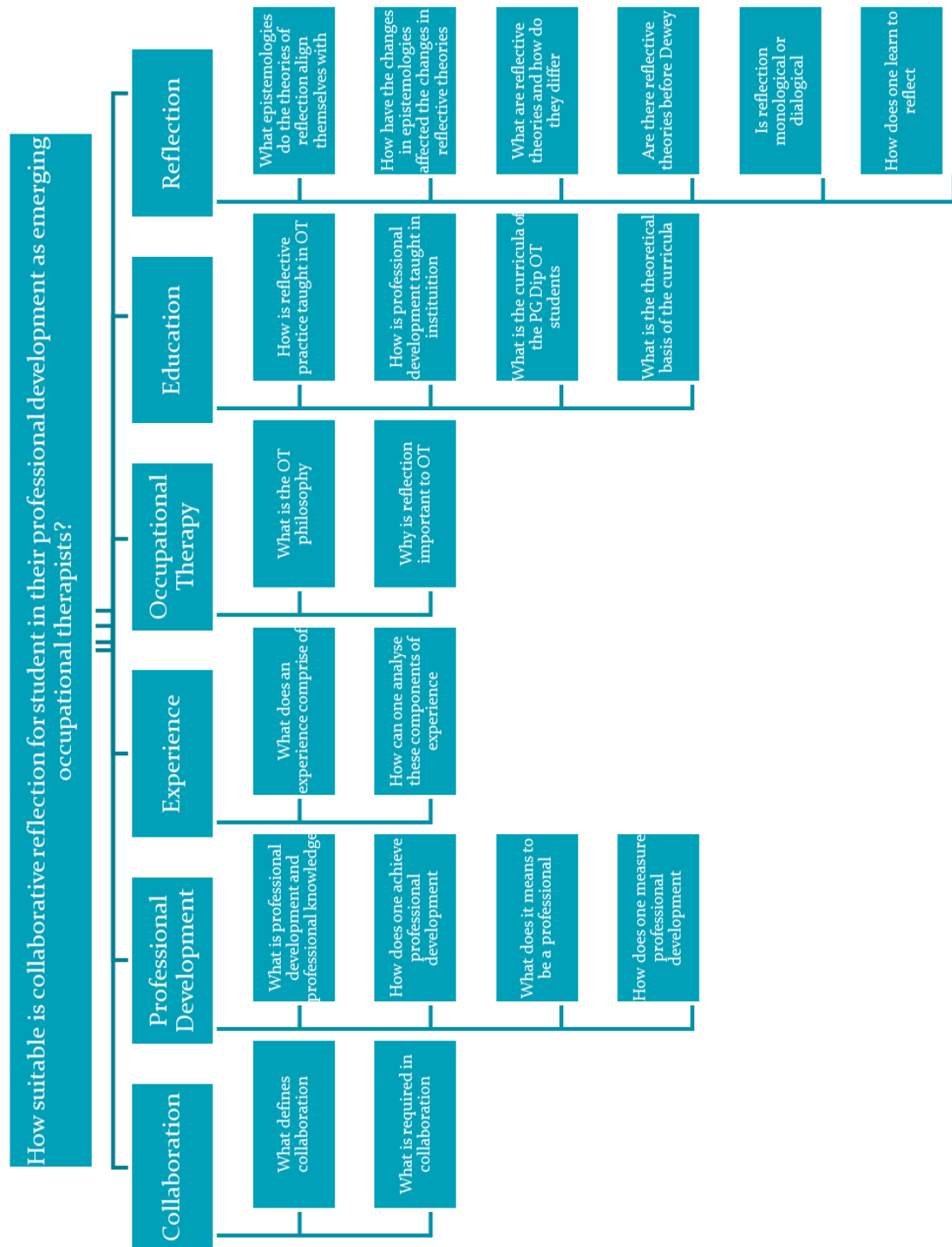


Figure 10. Literature review questions after round one

It was deemed impractical to conduct a secondary search for each review question as this would result in twenty unique searches, the corpus of information would be unmanageable. Judging from the first stage of the literature search, it is likely that the second stage would have resulted in more questions that would be of interest to the literature review hence it is unlikely that theoretical saturation (Dixon-Woods et al. 2006) would be achieved at the second or even the third stage. Therefore, I concluded that Critical Interpretive Synthesis was not a viable method for this review. This was perhaps a result of the following additional reasons:

- To understand dialogic reflection, I had to better understand how knowledge can be obtained from experience and dialogue. The nature of the research concerned epistemology. The depth involved and the amount of reading required resulted in many questions being raised after the first stage of searching.
- This method of literature searching only permitted the search of journal articles in the first stage. However, due to the theoretical nature of the discussion, more information would have found in books instead. While this was viable for Dixon-Woods et al.'s (2006) research which was on access to healthcare by vulnerable groups, it did not seem to be applicable for a literature review that relied very heavily on theoretical papers and books.

Upon concluding that Critical Interpretive Synthesis was unsuitable for the research, a more flexible and reflective approach to literature review was adopted. I called this process Reflective Synthesis.

Reflective synthesis

Reflective Synthesis is a process that I have developed to describe what I wanted to achieve from my literature review process and how to do so. My aim of my literature review process

was not only to aggregate information about the topic of study but also distil the questions that have not been explored by researchers and theorists.

From the topics that have been raised in the first stage of the search, the knowledge disciplines that the research was concerned with is far clearer. From the initial Critical Interpretive Synthesis I had conducted, I learnt two things about dialogic reflection,

1. Books were better sources of information on the theory of reflection and professional development
2. Dialogic reflection is not well researched or theorised and I had not found a theory that provided a satisfactory explanation about it.

While I wanted to learn as much as possible around the topic, I needed an approach to the literature search that allowed the use of books. In addition, the purpose of the literature review had shifted from crafting a theory about dialogic reflection to asking the right questions about it, which were then answered in the action research later.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Reflective Synthesis is process that was born out of the importance of the reflective process that Schön (1983) articulated and the synthesis of information by Dixon-Woods et al. (2006). The aim of Reflective Synthesis as I have defined it is not merely aggregating information about the topic of study, rather it is about understanding what the researcher knows, not yet knows and wants to know more about in relation to the topic of interest. There is a greater focus on the researcher's constructing and reconstructing of his or her knowledge as in the constructivist sense (Moon 2004). Reflective Synthesis serves to articulate this process of reading literature, understanding literature, assimilating knowledge and developing further questions about the topic to satiate the curiosity of the researcher whilst at the same time aggregating and summarising information that is already made known.

The research question can be understood as the problem that the researcher would like to solve. In my review, this problem was to understand how dialogic reflection can be suitable for occupational therapy students. Schön noted the following in his theory of reflection about a problematic situation,

It is rather through the nontechnical process of framing the problematic situation that we may organize and clarify both the ends to be achieved and the possible means of achieving them. (Schön 1983, p. 41)

In other words, it is through the process of framing and refining this research question that the researcher understands how to solve it, ie. develop a methodology to answer the research question. The literature review process is thus this framing and reframing process of the research question.

Similarly, in action learning, Revans argued that research is

... not in finding the answers to questions that have already been posed but in finding the questions that need to be answered. (Revans 1980, p. 118)

Action learning posits that learning is the sum of knowledge currently in use, questioning and reflection (Marquardt 1999). As the current knowledge about dialogic reflection specifically is lacking, learning about this topic was more heavily dependent on questioning and reflecting on it.

Schön (1983), Revans (1980) and Marquardt (1999) both articulated the primacy of understanding the problems that researchers set out to solve before developing a methodology for it. Schön (1983) goes a step further to assert that this process of understanding the problem is one that requires deep reflection. In action learning, Revans (1980) and Marquardt (1999) both argue that constant questioning and reflection is the process through which researchers develop knowledge about their topic.

In relation to reviewing literature, the reflective process that the researcher undergoes is often understated. Literature reviews serve the purpose of conveying what has been studied and researched and what requires more research (Barnett-Page and Thomas 2009). To this end, researchers often write with the aim of summarising information and articulating how they have conducted their literature review in practical steps that can sometimes be replicated as in a systematic review (Barnett-Page and Thomas 2009). However, in this process, researchers do not often demonstrate how they have related to the research that they have read, how the literature may have challenged their assumptions, preconceptions or prior knowledge or how the literature may have sparked their curiosity in other areas of the topic. These are the cognitive processes that a learner experiences as he or she learns about the topic (Moon 2004), however they are not often discussed by researchers.

Reflective Synthesis serves to shine a spot light on these internal processes. Using the reflective process as articulated by Borton (1970), I demonstrate how I have interacted with the literature that I read and how they influenced and modified the way I think, what I know and what I needed to explore further.

Process

My literature review process is thus characterised by two distinct phases of exploring and finding information and then developing and refining the review question. This is demonstrated in the figure below:

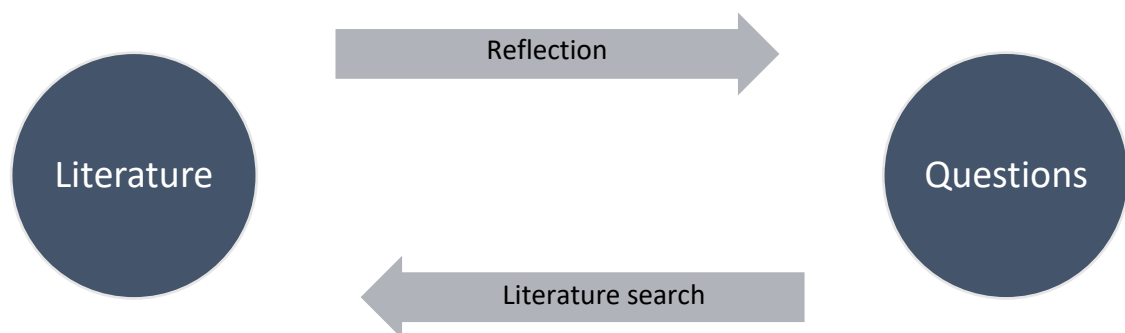


Figure 11. Reflective Synthesis

With reference to the figure above, the literature review would start with a research question and then an initial search for the literature using the research question as the review question. A reflection on the literature occurs and new questions that emerge from the literature then feed into the next cycle of literature searching. This iterative process terminates when the questions are so refined such that another round of literature search would be futile or when the questions are all answered, in that case, those questions are not of priority in the research. This results in a series of questions that have yet to be answered by the literature and perhaps can be answered by the research itself.

As I had already started the literature search using Critical Interpretive Synthesis earlier, I started the Reflective Synthesis process using the questions that the search had already generated.

There were a few questions that appeared to be similar and could be answered in the same literature search, hence I had grouped some of the review questions together in the same search. The reflective process I had used after reading the literature was adapted from Borton's (1970) "What" model of reflection:

1. What – What is this literature about and what does it mean?
2. So What – How does this literature contribute to the understanding of the topic?
3. Now What – What else do I not know and need to find out?

An example of the Reflective Synthesis that I had used is illustrated below where I explored the epistemology of reflection.

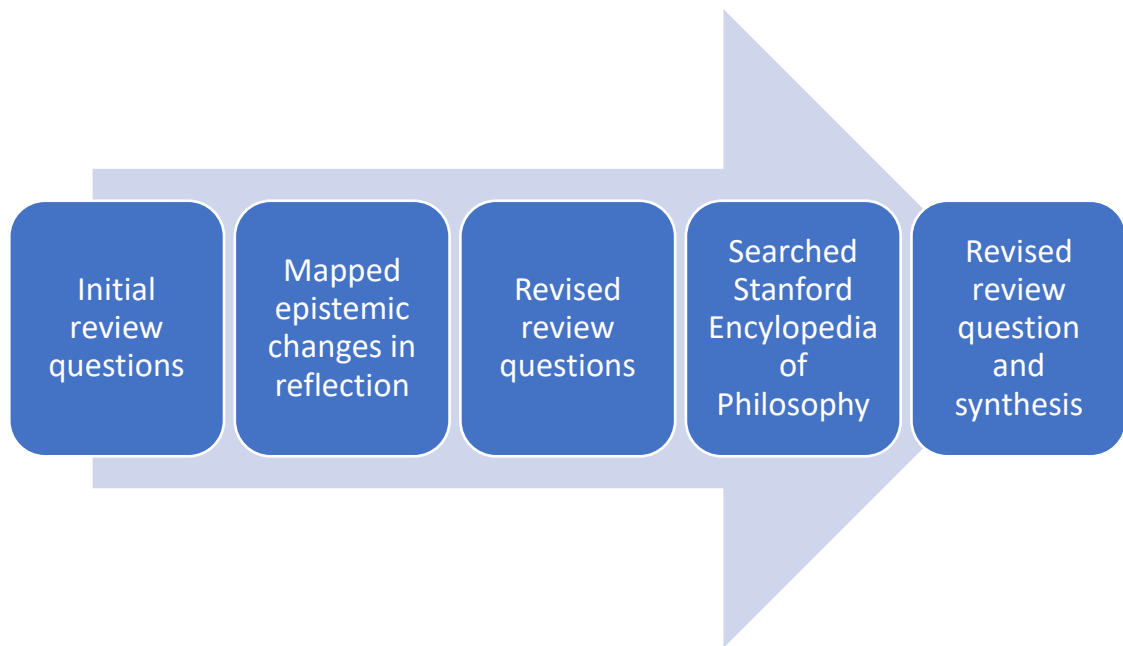


Figure 12. Reflective Synthesis on the epistemology of reflection

With reference to the above figure, I started the reflective synthesis on the epistemology of reflection using three review questions which I had obtained from the Critical Interpretive Synthesis conducted prior. These questions were:

1. What epistemology are theories of reflection based upon?
2. Are there other reflective theories from before 1933?
3. How has the change in epistemologies over the years affected the change in reflective theories?

These questions were about popular epistemic stances throughout the ages and how they influenced the theories about reflection. Hence, to map these changes, I started looking at works that more broadly described the process of obtaining knowledge from experience as the word reflection was not often used prior to Dewey's (1933) work. These works were mostly books and articles obtained by reference chaining works of theorists on reflection. I found out that prior to Dewey's (1933) work about the use of reflection in education, gaining knowledge from experience was more of a philosophical concept. The more popular epistemologies relating to

reflection appear to be constructivism (Kinsella 2006), empiricism (Locke 1690; Hume 1748; James 1912) and rationalism (Jowett 1980). Additionally, reflection was also featured in eastern philosophies in the form of spiritual enlightenment (Marcotte 2012) or moral awakening (Henke 1916).

However, upon reflection on what I had read, I was still unsure of how constructivism, empiricism, and rationalism underpinned reflection. Therefore, I refined my review question to “how is reflection constructivist, empiricist or rational?” I carried out this search in Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. After learning more about these philosophies, I concluded that theories about reflection appeared to come from various epistemologies. The belief in reflection is that knowledge can be generated from the intellectual analysis (rationalisation) of experience (constructivism) which also involves the sensory (empiricism), emotional and thought aspects (Dewey 1934). However, this required some interpretation on my part as theories of reflection often do not declare this explicitly. I was still confused as to how reflection can be from contradicting epistemologies. I felt that there was a need to know how knowledge can be created or discovered in the reflective process as it would be central to understanding dialogic reflection. However, this was a question that the literature searches could not answer hence I sought to understand this as part of action research. The final refined question was “what is the epistemology of reflection?”

The knowledge synthesised from reading and reflecting on the topic then became part of the background chapters in this thesis while the questions that could not be answered by Reflective Synthesis then fed into the action research.

Despite the change of literature review method, the initial search was useful in identifying the various disciplines which this subject matter involved. It also established that there was a lack of literature in the health and social care context and raised some initial questions that required

further reframing. It thus provided direction to which more literature could be found and broadened the search to include other disciplines.

Post-Literature Review

The review of the literature raised a few questions that I was not able to find a convincing answer to. It was also apparent that these questions were all related to the nature of reflection, perhaps due to all the confusion around it.

1. How can reflection be dialogic?
2. Is reflection only about learning about oneself?
3. What is the epistemology of reflection?
4. What types professional development can dialogic reflection result in?

These questions were included as part of the discussion in the action research later.

Appendix B: Cover Letter

Dear student,

I am currently carrying out a PhD here at the School of Healthcare Sciences. The PhD is entitled “Collaborative reflection: an exploration of its potential in pre-qualification occupational therapy education”.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research, please have a look a look at the attached information sheet and consent form for more information. If you have any queries about the research, you may contact me at wongky2@cardiff.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Yan Wong

PhD student

Cardiff University

School of Healthcare Sciences

Appendix C: Information sheet

COLLABORATIVE REFLECTION: AN EXPLORATION OF ITS POTENTIAL IN PRE-QUALIFICATION OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY EDUCATION

As part of this study I would like to invite you to participate in an action research (to be further explained below). Approval for this research has been granted by the university's Research Governance and Ethics Committee and your participation would be highly valued. However, before deciding whether you would like to be involved please read the following information carefully. You will also be asked to sign a consent form if you do decide to participate.

What is the purpose of the research?

This project is being conducted as part of my PhD at Cardiff University. The research aims to explore collaborative reflection, how it works and its suitability in occupational therapy education for a student's professional development.

Collaborative reflection is where there is more than one individual in the reflective process, commonly in a group of 2 or more people where a facilitator is present (Glazer et al. 2004). Glazer et al.'s (2004) study identified that reflecting in groups resulted in participants being more willing and more confident to make changes to their practice. It appears to offer opportunities for professional growth (Glazer et al. 2004; Morris and Stew 2007) and therefore, there seems to be a potential for its integration into occupational therapy education despite the lack of research in its use.

I am particularly interested in exploring the workings of collaborative reflection and hope to generate a theory with your input. Hence, I would like to invite you to take part in my participatory action research so that we can further develop our understanding of this subject together.

What is participatory, action research?

Unlike most research methods, action research can involve the active involvement of the researcher with the participants in the study. We will all be 'co-researchers' in exploring the theory of collaborative reflection.

Before the start of the research, I will generate a theory of collaborative reflection from the available research. Then, you will be invited to join me in exploring this theory through cycles of identifying the problems of collaborative reflection, taking part in reflective groups, evaluating, and reflecting on our experience. Through that, we will be able to modify the initial theory, developing it using our experience of collaborative reflection.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part in the study, you will have the right to withdraw at any time. Prior to the research you will be asked to sign a consent form together with this information sheet.

You have been invited to participate in this research as you are an occupational therapy student who has completed at least 6 placement hours, and have at least 10 weeks of placement hours to complete over the course of the study.

What will my participation in the research involve?

You, I and 6 other participants will form an action research group. We will meet for 8 sessions, every 6 weeks for an estimated time of 1.5-2 hours. The dates and time of meeting will be arranged such that it would be convenient for all of us. It is understandable if you are not able to attend all the meetings. The research is expected to start on April 2016 and end on April 2017.

The meetings will consist of discussions about the theory and reflective groups, where you are invited to share an experience which we can all reflect on. Due to the nature of our discussions, you are reminded not to disclose confidential information such as educator, placement, and

patient details. You are allowed to withdraw from the study at any point without prejudice. These meetings will be taped using an audio recording device for analysis later. Though the group meetings are aimed to develop a better understanding of collaborative reflection, they will be conducted in a relaxed and light-hearted manner and your candour will be very much valued.

Anything that results from the discussions such as mind-maps, diagrams or notes will be photographed for analysis. During the research you will be encouraged to keep a reflective log on the sessions or any thoughts you may have on collaborative reflection. Though it is not obligatory, sharing your reflection with me would help me understand your thoughts and feelings about reflecting in groups.

In between the sessions, I will transcribe and analyse the discussions and reflective logs. The analysis of the discussions will be shared on a forum/blog page where you will have access to them. You will have at least 1 week to look at the analysis and we will further discuss the analysis in the next session. Analysis of your personal reflective logs will be sent directly to your emails.

What are the benefits of taking part?

While there are no personal benefits in taking part, participation in the research will offer you the opportunity to jointly generate a theory of collaborative reflection which may provide others with an understanding of how it works. It is hoped that this theory may be transferrable to other healthcare courses and even in practice.

This research may also provide you with the opportunity to pool your experiences as a group and learn from each other through collaborative analysis. You are invited to share your own experience with the group and it is hoped that the group's input will help you in your own professional development.

Your participation may also give you an insight into research methods and processes, such as transcription, analysis and reviewing of literature. This experience may benefit you in developing and conducting your own research later in your course of study.

What are the disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Due to the nature of the research, the anticipated disadvantages/risks of taking part are relatively low. The meetings will take up 1.5 to 2 hours of your time every 6 weeks and are expected to take place in the university. Nonetheless, we will arrange the meetings to minimize the inconvenience eg. meeting on days when you have lectures. It is also understandable if you are not able to come to every meeting, you can have a look at the analysis on the forum to learn what has been discussed.

As reflection on past experiences may be emotive for some, you can seek counsel from your personal tutors if you wish. The university also has its own counselling services which can be accessed at: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/counselling/>. If during the course of research, you have any problems with anything, you can notify me or if need be, the supervisors of the research (Gail Boniface and Steve Whitcombe) who will be monitoring the research.

How will confidentiality be maintained?

At the start of the first meeting, group rules will be set to ensure confidentiality of the information shared during the meetings. You will be reminded to not disclose patient or setting sensitive information, or any unethical practice witnessed during the meetings and be mindful of the confidentiality policy of your placement setting. Pseudonyms will be used in the analysis and transcripts to protect the identity of the participants. The transcripts and analysis will be kept in password-protected folders. The analysis can only be accessed by me and the participants of the study. Extracts of the analysis may be shared with the research supervisors

when necessary. The results of the study will be presented as a PhD thesis at Cardiff University. Additionally, the results will also be shared at conferences and in scientific journals.

What do I do next?

If you are willing to participate in the research, please complete the attached consent form and return it to me. Thank you for your time in reading this information sheet. You can contact me at wongky2@cardiff.ac.uk if you have any queries or require further information.

Appendix D: Consent Form

Name of participant:

Research title: Collaborative reflection: an exploration of its potential in pre-qualification occupational therapy education

Name of researcher: Ken Yan Wong

Please initial the following boxes and sign below to indicate consent

1. I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet for the above research and have had the opportunity to ask any questions.
2. I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time.
3. I agree to the recording of my participation in the group sessions.
4. I understand that I am not obligated to share my reflective logs, opinions and personal experiences during the course of the study.
5. I agree to not disclose any information discussed within the groups to anyone outside the research study.
6. I agree to my anonymised comments/quotes being used in any write up of the research.
7. I agree to take part in this study and understand that I will receive a copy of this signed and dated consent form.

.....

PARTICIPANT'S NAME (please print)	SIGNATURE	DATE
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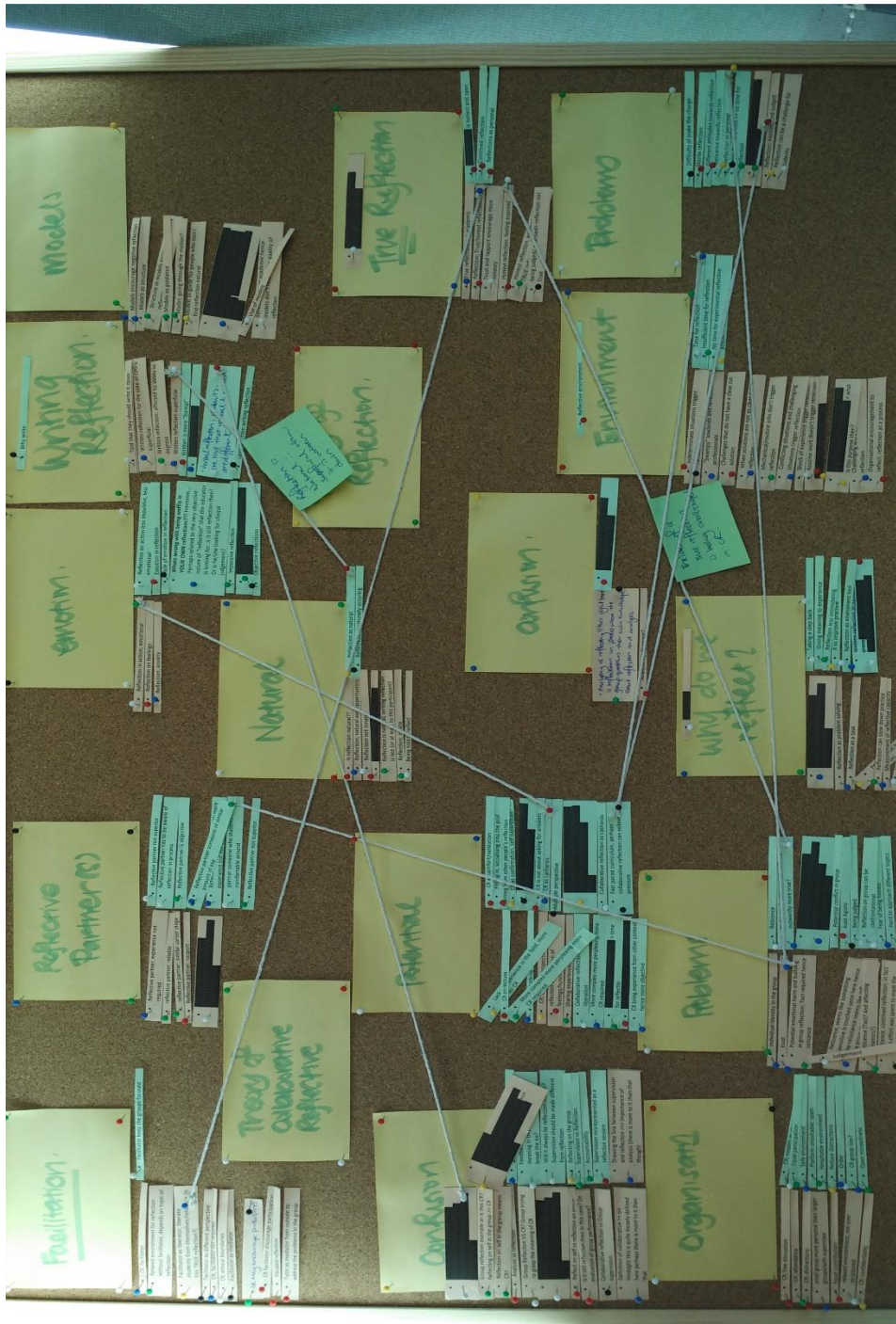
Ken Yan Wong
RESEARCHER'S NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE

Appendix E: Co-researchers' Demographic Information

Group	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Previous Degree	Past Work Experience
1	Eve	26	Female	BA Media Practice	Waitressing and support worker
	Sarah	32	Female	BA American Studies, Children Literature	Bookseller, bookshop Manager
	April	29	Female	BSc Sports and Physical Education	Teaching assistant, social work assistant, family support worker
	Geri	25	Female	BA English Literature	Retail assistant, receptionist, library assistant
	Nicola	30	Female	BA Educational Studies and Humanities	Support worker, occupational therapy support worker
	Karen	35	Female	BSc Exercise, Sport and Coaching Msc Nutrition, Physical Activity and Public Health	Health at work co-ordinator, active lifestyle manager, exercise on prescription and health walks co-ordinator
	May	27	Female	BSc Health and Social Care Studies	Optical Assistant, occupational therapy assistant
2	Alicia	35	Female	BSc Medical Science PGCE	Homeless outreach worker
	Sophie	25	Female	BSc Psychology MSc Clinical Psychology	Support worker
	Lea	25	Female	BA Fine Art – Combined Media	Occupational therapy technician, hotel facilities assistant, kitchen assistant

	Ava	22	Female	BA English Literature	Nanny, carer, retail assistant
	Isabella	30	Female	BA Fine Art - Sculpture	Occupational therapy assistant
	Olivia	22	Female	BSc Health and Social Care	Occupational therapy assistant, healthcare support worker
	Charlotte	23	Female	BSc Health and Social Care	Customer service officer

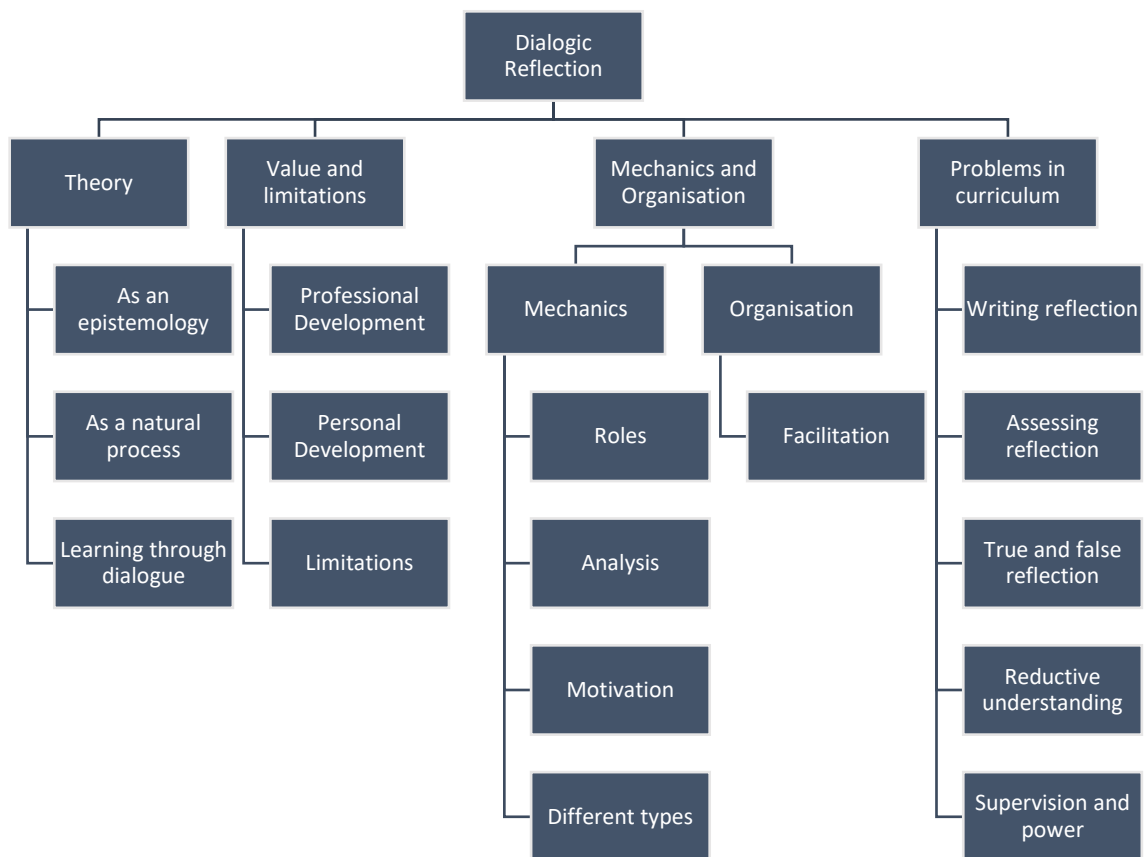
Appendix F: Session 1 Thematic Map



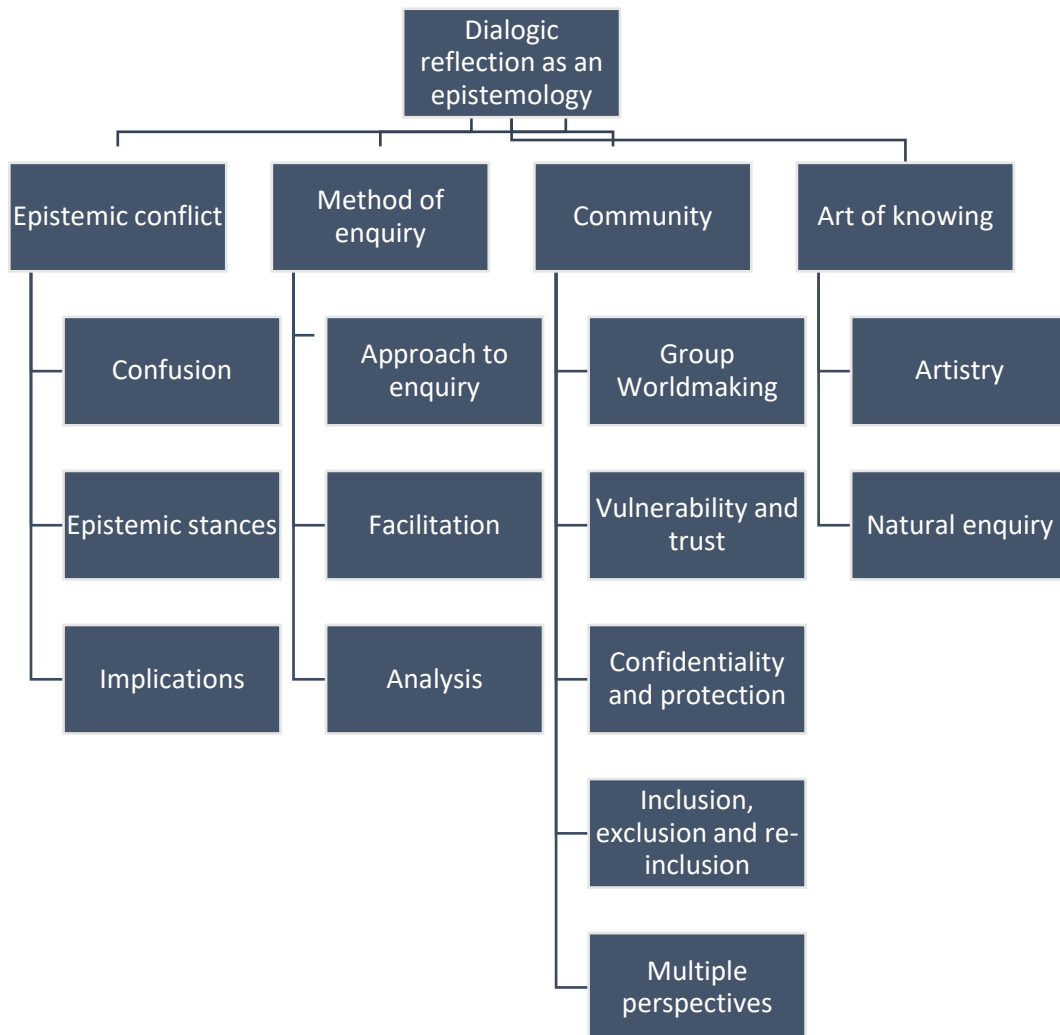
Appendix G: Sessions 1-4 Thematic Map



Appendix H: Sessions 1-7 Thematic Map



Appendix I: Final Thematic Map



Appendix J: A Caution About Collaboration

Whilst having reinforced the value of participation and collaboration in this research, an important area to consider is the idea of ownership of the research.

If I'm going to collaborate with people and I'm really going to live up to that commitment, I can't just write a report all by myself. If we generate a report together, we decide together how it's going to be used. (Lincoln 1997, p. 9)

Reason (1994) noted that it is paradoxical to write about research with a collaborative nature on one's own. In fact, in the truest form of collaboration, the entire process of the research should be shared amongst the co-researchers. However, in doing that it is also unclear who has the ownership of the research and its contents. This had led me to question some implications of collaborating with co-researchers: to what extent did I include the co-researchers in the process of the research, to what extent did we share the ownership of the research and the products of the research.

Heron and Reason (1997), however, noted that complete collaboration is rare. Co-operative Inquiry is more about the democratisation of the content, where all co-researchers are involved in the decisions about what the research seeks to find out and achieve, than the democratisation of the method, which involves the operational methods which are used to share the content of the research. Though strongly recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1989), complete collaboration in practice is often reduced to seeking fully informed consent from the co-researchers on the researcher's initial plan for the research then modifying the plan accordingly with their input to obtain consent (Heron and Reason 1997). In other words, though not collaborative in this sense, setting the research question and objectives prior to recruiting the

co-researchers, as I had done, is acceptable in the Co-operative Inquiry tradition if we were open and willing to change it as the group deemed fit.

In addition, dialogic reflection is about creating knowledge that is meaningful to the individual researcher participating in it. Hence the writing of this thesis is representational of what I have elicited and understood from my experience of dialogic reflection with my co-researchers. Even though these findings have been discussed at length with the co-researchers, it would only be realistic to accept that not everyone had arrived at the same understanding or valued the same conclusions. This thesis is, therefore, an expression of the knowledge that I had constructed from this dialogic reflective process with my co-researchers. It is my knowledge and hence it is only appropriate that I take ownership of it and the writing process.

Appendix K: Roles in a Dialogic Reflection

Roles in a dialogic reflection

While the facilitator role was an appointed role, the other members in the reflective group played different roles in the reflective groups as well.

Sometimes I am offering my own experience, sometimes I am analysing your experience, sometimes I'm the devil's advocate and I am slipping in and out of them. [Me in group two]

These roles however did not stay static and members slip in and out of them throughout the reflection.

Devil's advocate

This role was evident when co-researchers turned the reflection around to look at the experience from another perspective, it allowed the person who played this role to explore and consider the perspective of the other party. Also, it pushed the group to think differently and get out of group think

Analyser

The analyser was someone who questioned and offered his or her perspective to the reflection. They do so by using different methods of analysis. This was usually the way the members contributed to the dialogic reflections

Empathiser

Some co-researcher seemed to be able to express feelings or describe someone else's feelings more easily. These members would usually say "you must have felt..." "if I were you I would have felt..." "how did you feel..." when they are in this role. On one hand it provided validation for the members and also some form of comfort. Often empathy was the drive behind initiating a group reflection as well. Co-researchers felt the need to support one another on the course.

Macro-Analyser

This was a rare role in the reflective group because the members usually tend to get too involved in the analysis of each other's experience and were unable to take a step back to look at things from a broader perspective. The macro analyser was someone who looked at the patterns of discussion and commented on the general themes that resulted from the discussion. This helped the group to draw links and form connections at a more macro level. The macro analyser seemed like the facilitator at times as he or she pointed out circular discussions and summarised the session.

Reflector

The most common and most crucial role in the reflective group is the person who shared his or her experience for scrutiny. There were usually multiple reflectors in the group. The problem was when there were more reflectors than analysers because it then became an "aunt agony" situation where little analysis of experience and reflectors were merely voicing the grievances.

These roles had some semblance to the different stages in the process of reflection when articulated as a model. For example, the discussion of feelings as in Gibbs' (1988) model was driven by the empathiser in dialogic reflection; the drawing of relationships between theory and practice such as The Connective Strand in Stands for Reflection (Fish et al. 1991) can be seen in the analysis of the macro-analyser in a dialogic reflection. The complexity and fluidity of these roles implied that dialogic reflection was similarly fluid and complex in nature. They further

demonstrated that reflection when seen as a reflective dialogue with someone else is not procedural like in Gibb's (1988) model. The implication of understanding these roles in dialogic reflection in education is further discussed in Chapter Twelve.

These roles were fluid and a single participant may play multiple roles in a single dialogic reflection session. Group two felt that these roles may be closely related to one's personalities. Some were more sympathetic and supportive of others hence have a propensity to take on the empathiser role.

In highlighting these roles, group two believed that members of a dialogic reflection will learn to be able to better reflect because they are more aware of which roles they play often and explored the other roles that they had less experience in. By understanding the areas of reflection, one develops an awareness of the areas where one requires additional input from others. The group felt that members should explore all the roles but not be enforced to do so. Certain personality traits will cause people to be more comfortable in certain roles however this would then have an impact on the holism of their reflection. While dialogic reflection circumvents that by allowing multiple perspectives and multiple roles played by other people, for this to translate into personal reflections, the member has to explore these various roles and learn why they come more easily or difficult. Through this exploration, the group felt that one may perhaps develop one's reflective process.

Appendix L: Dialogic Reflection, Experientialism and Constructivism

Experientialism

Experientialism is a philosophy advanced by Johnson and Lakoff (1992), originating from the modern advances in cognitive sciences. Empirical studies have offered answers to some philosophical questions related to the internal processes of the mind, hence Johnson and Lakoff (1992) put forth a case for philosophers to rethink philosophies in light of these discoveries.

Experientialism is essentially making sense of experience. However, Johnson and Lakoff (1992) placed their philosophy in ontology and ethics rather than epistemology. The key principle of experientialism is the assertion that “Man is fundamentally an imaginative animal” (Johnson and Lakoff 1992, p. 4). Human reasoning is imaginative because of our ability to conceptualise, use metaphors and frame situations (Lakoff and Johnson 2003; 1980). Experientialism does not strive to seek absolute truth. Rather it argues that the state of being is granted by the metaphors that we live by (Lakoff and Johnson 2003; 1980). The abstract concepts about the world developed by humanity are metaphors that we have created to understand our experiences of the world. These metaphors are projections of our experiences and our existence is thus metaphorical (Lakoff and Johnson 2003; 1980). Experientialism seeks to understand this system of metaphorical thought as it will provide us with answers to the ontological question (Johnson and Lakoff 1992).

Dialogic reflection agrees that humans have the ability to develop concepts about the world through experience. This is evident from the ideas of worldmaking and group worldmaking that it is built on. However, this does not make humans imaginative because these concepts are ultimately grounded in experiences of the world. Experience is not projected onto metaphors

and concepts. It is the material from which we develop concepts through dialogue. Because of the dialogue that is required to develop these concepts in dialogic reflection, concepts of the world are not merely abstract representations of experiences. Concepts and knowledge about the world are developed through a process of co-operative exploration, in dialogic reflection. This co-operative exploration makes dialogic reflection an artistic way of knowing from experience. Dialogic reflection argues that it is difficult to look at an experience as a whole monologically and concepts developed are often skewed toward what we already know and how we see the world. As individuals, we see our experiences from a certain perspective and are blinded to the rest because of our world versions. Dialogically, however, experience can be appreciated for its multi-dimensions and thus knowledge or concepts that have been developed from this co-operative exploration is richer. Knowledge and concepts developed through dialogic reflection are not just mere projections of experience. They are developed thoughtfully, collaboratively and artistically.

Constructivism

Schön's (1983; 1987) work on reflection was based on von Glasersfeld's (1995) radical constructivism and Goodman's (1978) ways of worldmaking. Von Glasersfeld (1995) distinguished his work from that of Piaget's by asserting that:

... cognition serves the subject's organisation of experiential world, not the discovery of an objective ontology. (Kinsella 2006, p. 280)

Von Glasersfeld (1995) noted that it is cognition, not the objective reality that shapes the knowledge construction. Hence, the metaphysical question of reality is not of great importance. Goodman (1978) echoed the same idea in his work where he argues that world versions are more important than the possible existence of an objective external world. Lakoff and Johnsons' (1992) experientialism similarly sidesteps the question of objective reality as it is the representation of them that is of greater interest. In the same vein, objective reality is not the

primary concern in dialogic reflection, which is more focused on how reflectors understand each other's experiences and those of their own.

In dialogic reflection, it is possible to reflect on experiences that belong to other reflectors. From my observations of how the groups have reflected:

It is interesting that they are not only reflecting on their own experiences. They are drawing some learning points from each other's experiences as well. Sometimes, experiences they have brought to the group were stories they have heard from other people outside the group over lunch. [My reflective log of session two]

Experiences that were analysed in the room are not always shared experiences that belonged to the reflectors. There were instances where, through role reversal method of analysis, reflectors reflect on experiences that belonged to others. In a dialogic reflection, reflection is possible even if that experience does not belong to the reflector. This suggests that interaction with objective reality or the external world, if they exist, is not consequential to dialogic reflection. The nature of reality is not important. Therefore, like Goodman's (1978) and von Glasersfeld's (1995) theories of constructivism, dialogic reflection avoids the metaphysical question of reality.

Constructivists base their theories on three key principles (Noddings 1990):

1. All knowledge is constructed
2. The process of knowledge construction is cognitive
3. These cognitive structures develop as knowledge is constructed

The process of knowledge construction is reflective (Kinsella 2006). As one's knowledge grows, one's reflective process also changes. Knowledge constructed from experience informs the construction process. As new experiences are acquired, one reflects on them and this process grows and develops in complexity as one has more knowledge about the world. In dialogic reflection, though experience is explored through dialogue, the knowledge constructed is

individualised and in accordance to what each reflector deems as meaningful and worth learning about. The knowledge that reflectors distill from the experience is assimilated into the world version. This results in a development of their world versions which they will use when reflecting on future experiences. Therefore, dialogic reflection agrees with the first and third principle of constructivism.

However, the second principle of the process of knowledge construction being cognitive does not completely describe what dialogic reflection is about. Chapter Ten essentially argues that dialogic reflection is more than cognition. It is more than about understanding thoughts but also about understanding emotions and values in the experience. These are internal processes of the mind that extend beyond cognition. In Dewey's (1933) work on reflective thinking, he proposed that reflection is cognitive because of its place in decision making and understanding concepts. However, this is perhaps because Dewey (1933) perceived reflective thinking as an educational philosophy. If experience is artistic (Dewey 1934) and dialogic reflection is understanding experience, then it has to be more than a way of thinking. It is a way of empathising with the reflector, sharing one's values, demonstrating support and moral checking as discussed in the previous chapter. Knowledge is constructed in dialogic reflection as a result of these processes, which are internal but more than just cognitive.

Publications and Presentations

Date	Title	Mode
April 2016	Teaching and learning the esoteric: an insight into how reflection may be internalised with reference to the occupational therapy profession	Journal Article (Reflective Practice)
December 2017	6.45pm	Photography Presentation (Images of Research)
April 2017	Teaching/Learning Reflective Practice	Poster Presentation (Breaking Boundaries 2017) Awarded Best Poster
May 2017	Teaching/Learning Reflective Practice	Poster Presentation (Speaking of Science 2017)
June 2017	Teaching/Learning Reflective Practice	Poster Presentation (Doctoral Academy Annual Briefing 2017)
November 2017	Patients' stories in healthcare curricula: creating a reflective environment for the development of practice and professional knowledge	Journal Article (Journal of Further and Higher Education)
November 2017	Teaching/Learning Reflective Practice	Poster Presentation (Postgraduate Research Symposium 2017)
November 2017	6.45pm	Photography Presentation (Postgraduate Open House)
January 2018	Theorising Dialogic Reflection: Being the researcher and the researched	Conference Presentation (Qualitative Research Symposium 2018)
TBC	Intellect, Emotions and Values: The Reflexive Triad in Co-operative Inquiry	Book Chapter Draft
TBC	Knowers and Enquirers	Monograph

Teaching and learning the esoteric: an insight into how reflection may be internalised with reference to the occupational therapy profession

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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the ways in which reflective practice is learnt, taught and assessed within the profession of occupational therapy. It utilises individual experiences of reflection of both students and staff members in university and practice placement settings. The discussion places reflection within learning a profession's way of being and individual learner's relation to this 'sense of being'. It concludes that the 'rote' way in which reflection is currently used to demonstrate evidence of reflective practice is detrimental to the development of a reflective professional, in this instance, an occupational therapist.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 2 February 2016
 Accepted 4 April 2016

KEYWORDS

Reflective practice; reflection;
 education; learning;
 occupational therapy

Introduction

Due to the professional development engendered by reflection, reflective practice is of importance to the occupational therapy profession. Consequently, learning reflection is incorporated into the occupational therapy curriculum. However, drawing on the individual experiences, we argue that the way reflection is taught and learnt can be deemed as rote. This paper serves to elucidate the problems that may arise from teaching and learning reflection in a rote manner and suggests how it can be better done. In doing so, we also argue that there is room for research in this area to shed light on effective approaches to teach, assess and learn this esoteric concept.

The need for reflective practice

Adherence to appropriate ethical processes and good and caring professional conduct is quite rightly to be expected of staff in health and social care settings. Yet in England, the Francis report (Francis, 2013) unveiled numerous accounts of poor clinical practice, such as professional disengagement and declining professionalism. Furthermore, in Sweden, Mårtensson, Jacobsson, and Engstrom (2014) found that staff attitudes towards those with mental illness can be negatively influenced by contact with people with mental ill health in their personal life *and* the attitudes they encounter in their workplace environment. Reader,

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Gillespie, and Roberts' (2014, p. 678) systematic review of patients' complaints to healthcare systems across the world identified the fact that:

Healthcare organisations receive huge volumes of complaints (eg, over 100 000 annually on hospital care in the NHS)

The identification of poor practices affecting the caring and professional conduct of professional staff is the reason for the roles undertaken by regulatory bodies such as the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). In relation to allied health professions, the council serves its fiduciary purpose to the public by providing protection through scrutinising the practice of its registered practitioners (HCPC, 2013).

Alongside ethical and compassionate conduct, professional practice also requires practitioners to remain current with developments in the practical setting. With the rapid changes within the practice area of most health and social care practitioners, there is a need for them to constantly adapt and develop themselves professionally (Brockbank & McGill, 1998; Khanna, 2004). In relation to the allied health professions such as occupational therapy, its regulatory body (the HCPC) and the College of Occupational Therapists (COT) have encouraged, and indeed require, its practitioners to utilise and demonstrate reflection (COT, 2015; HCPC, 2008). In addition, this expectation and requirement to be able to reflect has been included in the World Federation of Occupational Therapists' (WFOT) entry-level requirements of students (WFOT, 2008). Consequently, occupational therapy programmes of study require their students to learn about, demonstrate and be assessed on their reflective ability in order to become qualified practitioners.

In the occupational therapy curriculum the authors of this paper are involved with, a keynote lecture introduces students to the theories of reflection and also provides them with a taste of the models that they can use to guide their reflections. Subsequently, they are required to successfully complete 1000 hours of practice placement in the field. This meant demonstrating and being graded on the ability to reflect on the problem-solving process, internalise feedback and utilise reflection in order to improve practice. Depending on the placement educator (a qualified occupational therapist judging the student in a practice setting), such judgement of reflection in practice is often made via a request to the student to document and show personal reflections for judgement. An additional way of judging students' reflection on the course is via reflective assignments, which are also graded. All of these assessments of a student's reflective ability account for a part of the student's final degree classification.

In the interest of ethical professional conduct, the HCPC and COT have identified reflective practice to be of importance. This value is consequently manifested in the designing of occupational therapy curriculum. Moreover, the underlying philosophy of occupational therapy is also another driver behind reflective practice in the profession.

The nature of occupational therapy and its relationship with reflective practice

According to the COT (2015, p. 2), the purpose of occupational therapy, 'is to enable people to fulfil, or to work towards fulfilling their potential as occupational beings'. Within the profession, there is an appreciation of people as unique individuals with their own set of strengths and weaknesses and circumstances; in other words, no service user is the same. This understanding should be the driver behind the provision of care that is sensitive to the

needs of the service user, i.e. client-centred care. Practising within a profession with such a view of its clients requires occupational therapists to use and demonstrate more than just technical knowledge (Schön, 1983). While academic or textbook knowledge of aspects such as human anatomy, physiology and psychology and occupational therapy's own occupational science is important, relying solely on such theory means therapists can only respond to clear-cut situations of practice rather than the 'swampy lowland' (Schön, 1983, p. 42) of professional practice where the situations encountered by professionals 'are confusing "messes" incapable of technical solution' (Schön, 1983, p. 42). Schön (1987) recognises that indeterminate situations, those that are not cited in textbooks, make up the bulk of practice situations and this is inherently relevant to occupational therapists which, as a profession, is least likely to work in a technical rational manner (Argyris & Schön, 1992). Technical knowledge, supplemented by implicit knowledge (Kinsella, 2008; Schön, 1987), is required to successfully negotiate effective interventions that are sensitive to clients' needs and thoughtful of their circumstances and strengths. It is this ability to identify where the implicit knowledge lies and how it is used that is expected of students on occupational therapy programmes (COT, 2014).

As the critical analysis of a practitioner's actions leads to continual professional development (Bolton, 2010; Schön, 1983), reflective practice can be seen as a fairly obvious combination of reflection and practice (Moon, 1999), both sharing an umbilical relationship in the health and social care milieu. Reflection enables practitioners to hone their intuitive process and tacit knowledge (Holly, 1989) in the professional environment, enhancing the development of professional competence (Jarvis, 1992; Moon, 1999; Saylor, 1990). However, it can often be learnt and taught in a somewhat rote manner in which learners' utilisation of reflective models and theories that attempt to provide guidance to the user, is assessed. In addition, reflection can lead to the practitioner reflecting on the negative elements of their practice and simply seeking to *do it differently next time*. Such a view leads to a somewhat negative interpretation of the nature of reflection where the practitioner only concentrates on the evaluation level of reflection; i.e. concentrating on what was not done well in order to change that in the future, rather than working out how something was done well in order to do it well again in the future.

Wald, Davis, Reis, Monroe, and Borkan's (2009) research identified that the reflective process engendered by use of field notes enabled students to develop as a person and a professional. Both Wald et al.'s (2009) study and Booth and Nelson's (2013) research identified that reflection helped develop a therapist's professional role in practice and was instrumental in settings where practice was recognised as being informed by therapist's past experiences as well as their technical knowledge. Saylor (1990) and Jarvis (1992) appear to concur with the view that reflective practice affords professional development. Additionally, reflection enables the practitioners to hone their intuitive process and tacit knowledge (Holly, 1989) in the professional environment and enhance the development of professional competence (Jarvis, 1992; Moon, 1999; Saylor, 1990).

The professional development proffered by reflection is crucial to occupational therapy practice (COT, 2014). The reflective process is made esoteric in occupational therapy by the fact that students need to grasp implicit knowledge whilst simultaneously appreciating the aesthetic nature of occupational therapy practice. In consideration of the epistemology of reflection, we argue that teaching it in a rote manner and assessing a student's actual written

reflection does not encourage reflective practice. Rather, it can encourage a superficial understanding and use of reflection.

The epistemology of reflective practice

Dewey (1933) could be argued to have laid the foundation for the development of the theory of reflection, as well as the later Schön (1983, 1987). Reflection can be seen as being sparked by a feeling of uncertainty and confusion about a situation (Dewey, 1933), prompting purposeful enquiry and problem-solving, rather than a technical reaction to a predictable situation (Finlay, 2008). Schön's (1983, p. 18) view is that:

Professional practice has as much to do with finding the problem as with solving the problem found.

Thus, reflection highlights the dualism of knowledge: explicit and implicit knowledge (Schön, 1983). Explicit knowledge refers to the technical knowing that a profession utilises. In occupational therapy, this is the academic knowledge on the workings of the human body, the understanding of occupational therapy models of practice and practical skills required in the profession. In general, technical knowledge is knowledge that can be gleaned from textbooks and taught in lectures. Whereas, implicit knowledge when used in professional practice is (Schön, 1983, p. 49):

Implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict.

Implicit knowledge can be seen as Polanyi's (1967) term, 'tacit knowledge'. Tacit (or implicit) knowledge being things we did not know that we know already. Argyris and Schön (1992, p. 10) describes this as:

What we display when we recognise one face from thousands without being able to say how we do so, when we experience an intimation of a discovery we cannot put into words.

Central to Polanyi's work is the assumption that 'we know more than we can tell' (Polanyi, 1967, p. 4). According to Argyris and Schön (1992), this tacit knowledge is crucial for understanding theories-in-use. They believe that every practitioner constructs a theory (professional reasoning), which they base their professional actions on. This theory is constructed using both technical and tacit knowledge and can be apparent in their behaviour in the professional setting (Kinsella, 2008). This tacit knowledge is key to reflection-in-action, where the practitioner examines the experience and responses as they happen and then carries out an action informed by this analysis (Finlay, 2008) without being fully aware of the knowledge or of how it is used. Schön (1983) is of the understanding that in professional practice, there are situations that are unplanned for and require swift judgement and immediate response. In these situations, tacit knowledge and reflection-in-action inform these actions reflexively.

According to Dewey (1958) and Schön (1987) there is an aesthetic nature to professional practice. This aesthetic nature is significant in occupational therapy practice where every client is treated as a unique individual and versatility and sensitivity to the client's circumstances is the crux of an effective intervention plan. The artistry of practice is largely tacit and can leave many practitioners unsettled as they struggle to find a clear explanation of this artful competence they often find themselves demonstrating. This type of confusion and uncertainty is reflected in Boyd and Fales' (1983, p. 99) research participants' comment:

I know that I reflect and I consider myself a reflective person, but I have never thought about it and I am not exactly sure what it is that I do.

Occupational therapists work in the indeterminate zone where both technical and tacit knowledge work like acrylics on a canvas to produce a work of art – the art of professional occupational therapy practice. Thus, technical knowledge and tacit knowledge inform professional practice. They do so by enabling the practitioner to deconstruct experience and reconstruct it with new understanding, hence leading to professional growth.

The teaching of reflection should hence be built around enabling students to learn the tacit knowledge required and gain an understanding of the artistry of occupational therapy practice. As mentioned previously, teaching it, however, in a rote manner does not provide the student with the opportunity to learn and experience the intricacies of practice. This, in conjunction with assessing the student's written reflection, can lead to a superficial understanding of reflective practice. We argue that enabling students to learn how to reflect and assessing their learning, rather than their actual reflection, would be a better approach.

Learning reflection

When students are being taught how to reflect, reflection, itself an esoteric and nebulous concept, can be reduced to getting the student to look back at what the student has done wrong and how he/she can use this evaluation of self-criticism to identify how to do something better in the future. While this essentially covers the head and tail of reflective practice when it is seen as a method of practice evaluation, the enriching elaborate process of deconstructing previous assumptions and reconstructing new knowledge which rests between the looking back at one's practice and the deciding how to do that practice better in the future, is often pushed to one side. Thus, reflection becomes simply evaluation of practice, not of oneself carrying out that practice. This view of reflection and ways in which it can often be taught lends itself to a reductive view of a much wider concept, limiting it to a reductive technique to demonstrate professional development and thus satisfy lecturing staff and professional and registration bodies.

It is undoubtedly the case that reflective practice, being one of the most popular theories of professional development (Kinsella, 2009), has been adopted across the board by the HCPC (HCPC, 2008). However, amidst the desire to get onto the reflective bandwagon, reflective practice can be reduced to being touted as a quick and dirty, foolproof method to professional development with a tendency to concentrate on the negative side of professional practice. Bengtsson (1995) noted that the popularity of reflection has created an ironical situation where it is used in an unreflective way (Kinsella, 2009) and utilised in its most reductive form, stripped of its critical analytical components. There is an apparent conceptual confusion of the definition of reflection amongst academics and disciplines (Finlay, 2008; Fook, White, & Gardner, 2006; Kinsella, 2009). Indeed, even luminaries in the field of reflection do not appear to agree on the same definition, each having a personal twist in keeping with their own theories of it (Gibbs, 1988; Johns, 2004; Moon, 1999; Schön, 1983). Kinsella (2009, p. 5) aptly states that reflection has become:

So broad and idiosyncratic in its application that some have suggested that it (*reflective practice*) is in danger of becoming an empty, meaningless phrase, that at once means everything and nothing.

Perhaps the onus should be on the professional bodies, advocating reflection, to consider the literature on reflective practice to craft an understanding of reflective practice that is applicable to professions that is not reductive, but expansive. Such an expansive view of what reflective practice might be should enable the practitioners of a profession to demonstrate reflection is more than just evaluation, but is something which causes the reflective practitioner to 'consider the grounds of their belief and its logical consequences' Dewey (1933, p. 7) within their reflective practice.

If this reconceptualisation of reflective practice occurs within the allied health professions, a further onus would then be placed onto its educators of students to perhaps reconsider how it is taught and assessed. Then there is the issue of where the best place to teach or encourage reflective practice might be. For example, Schön's (1983) understanding of the continuity of thinking, where knowledge begets new experience, which begets new knowledge, leads us to wonder if reflection can be taught in a classroom. Schön's (1987) artistry of practice reveals an inherent paradox: to understand practice, one has to first do it and feel it. We can therefore insinuate from Schön (1987) that occupational therapy students should experience reflective practice before trying to understand it.

Russell (2005) explored teaching reflection without talking about the word reflection itself. He identified that educating on reflective practice can often be little more than 'telling people to reflect and then simply hoping for the best' (Russell, 2005, p. 203). He concluded that reflection can indeed be taught, however, this is best done not through conventional lecture-and-listen methods. Reflection, therefore, is best understood through doing. Just as Schön (1983) explicated, tacit knowledge on how to reflect is constructed from the action of trying to reflect. As professionals gain more experience in their fields, they learn the ability to monitor and change their practice concurrently or even intuitively (Finlay, 2008). Inexperienced practitioners have the propensity to rely on rules and standard procedures (Garrett & Schkade, 1994). In these cases, models of reflection can be used to guide the process by providing prompts to spur the analytical and evaluative processes, but perhaps it is only when those prompts and guides become innately internalised within the professional that he/she becomes a reflective practitioner. Perhaps when early on in a professional career, he/she is not meant to, and should not be expected to completely understand reflective practice as an undergraduate student. Perhaps that understanding is self-developed with later experience in the field and a growing understanding of oneself as a practitioner.

Despite their potential for use as guides to reflection, giving students a plethora of reflective models to pick and choose from can have its own pitfalls (Johns, 2004). Without a clear understanding of the theoretical underpinnings behind the models, the learner may be led to a reductive understanding of reflective practice. At this level, the reflection is superficial, impassive and lacks analytical acumen (Fenwick, 2001; Richardson & Maltby, 1995). Whilst learning may take place at this level, transformative learning is only achieved when one is able to conduct *ex post facto* reflection through the appreciative eye (Machon, 2009; Roberts, 2013) to challenge one's premise: beliefs, assumptions and norms (Mezirow, 1990). Schön (1983) argues that inexperienced practitioners should distance themselves from their work to take the time to think through situations. Through this, one is then able to flourish as a person, a therapist and a professional (Fish & de Cossart, 2007).

Teaching reflection via supervision of students

There can be something of a goldilocks dilemma when teaching reflection in a supervision setting, in that it is important to discover the *just right* level of possible intrusive guidance and the private reflections of the students. Therefore, learning to reflect is a careful balance of guidance provided and privacy in order to encourage honest reflections (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012; Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009). However, getting the balance right is not easy. For example, in Boniface's (2002) study, it surfaced that reflection can often be better when carried out in the presence of someone else. However, a supervisor (who will be sitting in judgement on the learner) may not be the best person with whom to reflect. Any reticence faced by the reflective practitioner, in such a situation, stems from the vulnerability one feels when exposed to analysis and evaluation (Boniface, 2002), especially in the presence of a more experienced, qualified practitioner. Thus, the perceived overpowering presence of a supervisor may essentially inhibit the learner's ability to self-analyse and strive for personal excellence (Harvey & Struzziero, 2008) through fear of exposing too much vulnerability to that supervisor. In Russell's (2005) experience, there are students who have invented experiences for reflecting upon in order to complete assignments quickly and/or to demonstrate their abilities rather than their weaknesses. The pressures of needing to perform had apparently led to the defeat of the initial purpose of grading a reflection: to gauge a student's analytical and evaluative faculties and led to a culture wherein students felt they needed to demonstrate prowess via reflections. Consequently, this resulted in the production of a reflective piece that was contrived and sterile and sanitised of the messiness of practice in order to not create an adverse grading from the supervisor. This is a blatant clash with the belief system of reflection where openness is valued (Fay, 1987).

Gilbert (2001), drawing on Foucault, argues that supervision is a form of hegemony over professions. Foucault (1980) suggests that surveillance is omnipresent and is made ethical when it is made explicit through the form clinical supervision (Clouder & Sellars, 2004) in the case of allied health professionals. Gilbert (2001) believes that, surveillance in the form of supervision, is heavily reliant on the practitioner's ability to self-manage or, in other words, practise reflectively. The occupational therapy professional body's (COT, 2015) push to encourage practitioners to write or talk about their activities under the guise of continuing professional development is a way of making practitioners take responsibility for themselves and their consequential actions, which Gilbert (2001) describes as moral regulation of the profession. While moral regulation through reflective practice is undoubtedly important in a professional setting where professional action is peppered with ethical dilemmas, surveillance does not necessarily need to take the form of *public* reflection, but rather for that reflection to actually happen and influence the ways in which practitioners think and work. Gentle guidance to aid and provide a reflective environment to allow a student to explore and analyse his/her experience is more important (Boniface, 2002). After all, should it not be the reflective process that educators grade rather than the product of reflection which, when submitted for grading (in the form of a written reflection), is likely to be presented by the students as tidy, contrived and incongruent to the actual experience? Dewey (1933) is of the understanding that reflective action is dissimilar to directive action ordered by a superior. Change in practice derived from direct instructions and excessively close supervision is not reflective but directive, hence students should be guided through the reflective

process and be allowed to arrive at their learning needs on their own. This would require a degree of emancipation from educators and supervisors.

Clouder and Sellars (2004, p. 263) describe Boud, Keogh, and Walker's (1985) view of individuals reflecting by mulling over their actions as:

A conceptualisation of reflection as a 'monological' process, which is psychological, asocial and comes naturally to most of us.

This implies that reflection should be done by the person reflecting on their own and that everyone understands how to 'do' reflection. It is an internal process which is likely to be harmed by sharing with others and even more threatening to the reflector being graded on the nature of that reflection. It is quite hard to work out how such a grading on a student's personal raw reflection can be made. Additionally, even if this were seen as plausible, a perfectly written analytical piece of reflection does not necessarily imply that there is any learning that resulted; or change in practice (Russell, 2005). Conversely, a change in practice does not necessarily imply that there is any element of reflection or analysis that underpins it.

Placement educators within occupational therapy embrace reflection in their own practice in different ways (Finlay, 2008). According to Smyth (1992), reflection is interpreted differently by everyone, hence this subjectivity cannot be objectively measured through assessment of the reflection. Furthermore, reflective practice is an iterative developmental process of experiencing and reflecting or thinking and doing (Schön, 1987). Therefore, judging the students' reflective ability by reading a piece of reflective writing, which would be temporal and bounded by circumstances at the point of writing, is doing injustice to the intricacies involved in either reflecting or judging how it is carried out by students. The idea of grading a piece of reflection can oversimplify and linearise the process. This is especially so when the product being graded is a reflection in the form of a written 'confessional' (Gilbert, 2001, p. 199). Perhaps this could be a contributory cause of the reductive understanding of reflective practice where the product of reflection is taken to be representative and, in some cases, more important than the elaborate process involved. Giving a grade to a student's written actual reflection is tantamount to passing a judgement on how good or poor the reflection is. However, it is hard to see how one person can judge the efficacy of another's personal reflection, but somewhat easier to see how one person might be able to judge how well another person underwent a reflective process, based on their discussion of that process. Nevertheless, in the case of the profession of occupational therapy, in order to meet the expectations of both the professional (COT, 2015) and regulatory bodies (HCPC, 2013), a form of grading is required with respect to students' ability to reflect. A product of reflection cannot be assigned a grade at face value without careful consideration of the process that took place prior to its production. This can be achieved through guidance and this paper, therefore, suggests that the reflective product for grading is what the student does with their reflection rather than the reflection itself.

Complex structured rubrics have been developed to grade reflection, however, no single rubric has been widely adopted (Field & Vernazza, 2013). University of Minnesota (2015) and Georgia State University (2015) have utilised a rubric for reflection. Whilst grading the level of thinking in the reflection, these rubrics have also factored in mechanical proficiencies such as spelling, grammar and structure of reflection and even the use of citations in the reflective assignment. While pertinent to assessing a student's academic abilities, such criteria

should perhaps be reconsidered if the ultimate aim of grading a reflection is to assess a student's ability to engage with the process.

Conclusion and further research recommendations

Reflective practice is crucial to occupational therapy and, by extension, an important component in occupational therapy education. However, teaching and learning reflection in the rote manner encourages a superficial understanding and use of reflection. Presenting students with a range of models to pick and choose from is not sufficient as they need to be internalised by learners (Johns, 2004). Students can best understand reflection by experiencing it personally (Schön, 1983), with ample guidance (Russell, 2005) in a supportive environment (Boniface, 2002). Reflection can be seen as something to be encouraged via supervision, yet supervision walks a fine line between emancipation and emasculation (Smyth, 1985). Supervisors should be aware of the power dynamics and encourage constant open feedback from their students in order to encourage reflection in a supportive, rather than judgemental, environment. Grading and scrutinising reflection places considerable pressure on students. Serious consideration should be given to what exactly it is that supervisors should be grading – the written piece of reflection or the elaborate reflective process that the student experienced.

This paper has also highlighted the need for further research in the following areas:

- Teaching reflection effectively is difficult as it should be built around enabling students to learn the tacit knowledge and gain an understanding of the artistry of occupational therapy practice, both being esoteric concepts themselves.
- While it has been previously established that assessing a student's written reflection defeats its original purpose, it is still paramount that educators and supervisors are able to gauge a student's understanding of reflection to judge their readiness for practice.
- The utilisation of reflective models does not imply an understanding or a skill application of the theories. Schön (1983) suggests that learners achieve an understanding of reflection by experiencing it personally, however, guidance and a supportive environment is also required (Boniface, 2002). There is a need to be aware of the conditions which foster the reflective capacity such that they can be incorporated into the curriculum.

Future research in the above areas will shed light on more effective approaches to teaching, assessing and learning reflection in occupational therapy education and hence, better prepare students to be reflective practitioners.

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Teaching/Learning Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is a core tenet of occupational therapy however preliminary findings from an action research conducted shows that student occupational therapists face difficulties demonstrating it as part of the curriculum.

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Reflection Is Important Why is reflection required in curriculum?

To **protect the public** from unethical practice, regulatory bodies scrutinise practitioners through their demonstration of reflective practice.

hcpc



Professional practice also requires practitioners to constantly **adapt and develop**.

Hence, students practitioners are expected to **learn about and be assessed** on their reflective ability.



... But Nebulous Why is it hard to teach/learn it?

Reflection was introduced to professional practice in an **ambiguous** way by Schön.



Schön's work is **not sufficiently analytical and articulated** to enable us to follow the connections between experience and cognition to achieve reflective practice.

Reflection can thus be taught in a rather **rote** manner where students are **lectured on the theories** and then **expected to demonstrate it** in their practice.



Difficulties of Reflecting Students' experience of reflecting

I find it hard to express myself on paper... I find it very **superficial** ... you can reflect on these little things **naturally** but as soon as I have been told to write it down, it becomes so bit-ty.



I had an educator I didn't get on with that well ... he was **analysing like it was an essay** and was pulling faces... actually it made me feel quite **raw** and quite **exposed**.



My reflections are quite **private**, ... I felt like I wanted to **write one for me and then one for them**.



I think it defeats the purpose doesn't it? If you **can't be truthful** when you reflect then what is the point of doing that?



When I was on my placement, they did regular reflection. It was quite **militant** in the way it was done... it was **like they were forced**...



Sometimes you feel that you have to write it quite **academically** and I don't know if that is a true reflection.



How To Teach/Learn Educating the reflective practitioner

Learn By Experiencing

Schön's artistry of practice reveals an inherent paradox: to understand practice, one has to first do it and feel it. **Implicit knowledge on how to reflect is constructed from the action of trying to reflect**. As professionals gain more experience in their fields, they learn to monitor and change their practice intuitively.

Way of Knowing

The way reflection is delivered may imply that it is about finding out what went wrong and how to do it better. Reflection is a richer and more **artistic process of knowing from experience**. Hence it should not be touted as a quick and dirty method of achieving professional development.

Guide Don't Grade

Grading written reflections is passing judgement on the expression of the process and not the process itself. **Ample guidance on reflection walks a fine line between emancipation and emasculation**. Educators should be aware of how students are reacting to the way reflection is being encouraged and adjust their level of guidance.





Patients' stories in healthcare curricula: creating a reflective environment for the development of practice and professional knowledge

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ABSTRACT

Patient and public involvement in the provision of healthcare professional education is considered best practice by both the Healthcare Professions Council and the Nursing Midwifery Council. One key activity in healthcare education is the classroom-based 'patient story'. This consists of a person re-telling and reflecting on their experiences of their health-related problem and their interaction with health services. The primary objective of this article therefore was to explore educational theory in order to offer a theoretical critique of the use of patient stories in healthcare education. The article explores the theory–practice gap, theories of reflection as well as dialogue, and proposes that the use of patient stories in healthcare education may help to better prepare students for the realities of professional clinical practice. Patient story told firsthand in the classroom creates a significant learning experience in which both the student and the patient reflect and learn through dialogue, positively impacting on attitudes, beliefs and improved patient care. We argue that the incorporation of patients' stories in healthcare education encourages the use of reflection and facilitates critical thinking, which in turn can help to bridge the theory–practice gap.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 3 April 2017
Accepted 8 November 2017

KEYWORDS

Patient stories; reflection;
dialogue; knowledge

Introduction

Including the public and the community in the planning and delivery of health and social care services has been a feature of government policy since the 1980s, empowering people to get involved in shaping services in a way that meets the needs of the community (Reeper and Breeze 2007; Health Foundation 2011; Mockford et al. 2012; Tew, Holley, and Caplen 2012; Terry 2013; Turnbull and Weeley 2013). Studies have noted that working with the public and wider community in clinical service developments contributes positively to changing health professionals' attitudes, values and beliefs (Challans 2008; Mockford et al. 2012; South 2004).

The development of patient and public involvement in healthcare education was initially led and tested predominantly in the field of mental health and social care but has since been adopted more widely in healthcare professional education (Cooper and Spencer-Dawe 2006; Costello and Horne 2001; Job, Anstey, and Hopkinson 2016; Kelly and Wykurz 1998; Lathlean et al. 2006; Raj et al. 2006; Terry 2013; Tew, Holley, and Caplen 2012). Today, patient and public involvement is a requirement in healthcare professional education; both the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC 2014) and the Nursing and

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Midwifery Council (NMC 2010) require those who plan and deliver education to demonstrate service user and carer involvement in their training programmes.

The Health Foundation (2011) conducted a literature review and found strong evidence that patient and user involvement in healthcare education benefits the learners, educators and also the service users themselves, at least in the short term. It goes on to recommend research exploring the longer-term benefits of this education (Turnbull and Weeley 2013). More recently, Edwards et al. (2016) conducted a study and discovered that patient involvement in a cancer education programme improved student knowledge and confidence when compared to a control group of traditionally taught students. The involvement of patients and the public in healthcare education programmes, however, remains patchy across the UK, and Terry (2013) suggests that patient and service users are an under-utilised resource in training programmes (Turnbull and Weeley 2013).

The Health Foundation (2011) discovered that one of the most common types of patient involvement in education includes people sharing their experiences or telling their stories. Haigh and Hardy (2011) believe that, when a patient tells their story, it lays the foundation of the 'human experience' that can affect the heart as well as the mind and offer all those involved the opportunity for reflection.

The aim of this article is to offer a theoretical critique of the use of patients' stories in healthcare education. We argue that the incorporation of patients' stories in healthcare education allows for reflection to occur in a safe and conducive environment, bringing the 'real world' of practice into the classroom. Practice and professional knowledge is developed in the context of the practice setting and is informed and refined by the input of the patients. Hence, students are equipped with knowledge that is suitable for the challenges of modern practice within a patient-centred paradigm.

Preparing students for the challenges of practice

The regulation of healthcare professionals has indicated the importance of the integration of theory and practice within a holistic curriculum. Professional bodies have laid down guidelines for education providers to include a minimum number of hours spent on practice placement (HCPC 2014; NMC 2010, 2015). It is evident that practice-based learning is crucial and complementary to the lectures and skills taught in the university setting.

However, as knowledge leads to new experiences, which in turn lead to the construction and reconstruction of new knowledge, students need to be taught the fundamental theories before they are ready for practice placements (Schön 1984). Consequently, and unintentionally, a disparity between theory and practice is established whereby an incongruence exists between what is taught in universities and what actually happens in practice settings. Nonetheless, we argue that this theory–practice gap is bridged by reflective dialogue, which can be encouraged by the use of patient stories in healthcare education (Dewey 1933; Schön 1984).

Dewey (1933) indicated that learning should occur within the context of its application. Hence, in the example of healthcare education, knowledge construction should occur in the practice setting, such that it can be more easily applied by students when they become qualified practitioners themselves. Thus, the major responsibility of all education leaders is to put in place learning that engages students intellectually, socially and emotionally and, thereby, supporting educational approaches that create significant impact and lasting improvements in learning that impact on practice (Glickman 2002; Stoll, Fink, and Earl 2003). Fink (2003) highlights the importance of critical thinking skills in the higher educational setting and advocates the creation of 'significant learning experiences' by colleges and universities as opposed to the delivery of memorisable knowledge often delivered in large lecture theatres. We attest that this is the value and primacy of patients as teachers in the classroom setting – memorable learning that has the potential to be of value to the student after the course is over and on into their professional healthcare practice (Fink 2003); that is, person-centred learning that leads to person-centred healthcare (Job, Anstey, and Hopkinson 2016).

The theory–practice gap

In healthcare education, the curricula do not merely revolve around scientific knowledge but additionally include aesthetic, personal, ethical and emancipatory knowledge (Carper 1979; Chinn and Kramer 2008). Professional knowledge and behaviour form a crucial part of education in the preparation of practitioners with a holistic understanding of practice and its underpinning theories (Bosser et al. 1999). Nonetheless, teaching in a university setting arguably creates a rather false environment, shielded from the reality of practice (Eraut 1994). Gold standard practice is taught and encouraged in university, which students may find impractical on their placements due to barriers such as time constraints, heavy patient loads, policies and directives that vary between countries, health boards, settings and even wards in the same hospital (Bosser et al. 1999). This leaves students in a state of confusion as a result of the incongruence between what is taught in universities and what they have experienced or seen on placement. Despite the incorporation of placements in healthcare education, students find bridging theory and practice difficult (Ajani and Moez 2011).

While one of the aims of practice placement is to encourage reflective thought, practice settings may not be the most conducive environment for it. Reflection necessarily requires ‘surprise’ (Schön 1984, 56) or ‘perplexity’ (Dewey 1933, 23) and ‘experimental actions’ (Schön 1984, 269), the incorporation into practice of which can be challenging in some health organisations that prioritise efficiency. This is a great difficulty for students who need to practise reflectively; that is, when the environment is unable to accommodate actions that may be experimental and inefficient. Therefore, the theory and practice disparity is perpetuated, as students struggle to examine the relationship between the theoretical knowledge learnt in university and its application in practice settings (Ajani and Moez 2011).

Patient stories as reflective materials

The university attempts to provide a protected environment for learning and hence to make it more conducive to reflective thought, relative to practice settings. Incorporation of patients’ stories in education brings the context of the practice setting into the university to encourage reflection on the part of students; therefore, learning occurs within the context of practice settings, in the safety of the university (Dewey 1933; Eraut 1994). Patients’ stories are essentially personal experiences rich with emotions, action and intellect, all interacting with each other in ‘subtle shadings’ and ‘developing hues’ (Dewey 1934, 44). Students have the opportunity to listen to the richness of the ‘lived experience’ and tease out themes and ideas that they can reflect upon in their own practice (Job, Anstey, and Hopkinson 2016). It is important to note that students are not engaging in a reflective dialogue with the patient’s experience but, rather, with their own practice and knowledge, enhanced by their own interpretations of the patient’s experience.

Though theoretically different from the concept of reflection as understood by Schön (1984), it is still reflective thought as indicated by Dewey (1933). Students are first in a state of perplexity and confusion about their own knowledge and practice and what they have understood from the patient’s experience. Then, there is a period of the suspension of their beliefs for further examination. They will finally emerge with new knowledge, after rejecting, affirming or reconstructing their prior assumptions and beliefs (Benner et al. 2009; Dewey 1933). These patient stories serve as materials and triggers for deeper reflective thinking for students.

The reflective dialogue between the students and the patients in the university setting is unique in the sense it exists in a safe yet contradictory environment which fosters reflective thought. In this dialogue, the university, home to intellectual theories and quintessential practice, meets the patients, who bring along with them their perspectives as recipients of healthcare, enriched with emotions and the understanding of the reality of being patients within the health system. These two entities, though seemingly conflicting in nature, work harmoniously to trigger a state of perplexity in the student, whereby they pause to question their practice and understanding of theories (Job, Anstey, and Hopkinson 2016); thereby bridging the theory–practice gap through reflective thought.

Russell (2005) noted that teaching reflection is more about teaching the theories of reflection. Students should be allowed to learn how to reflect by being able to practise it (Wong, Boniface, and Whitcombe 2016). These patient stories provide an alternative opportunity for students to practise and learn how to reflect, in addition to when on placement. As they are triggers for reflection, the reflection itself should still be supplemented with the appropriate amount of guidance from educators.

Patient stories as a dialogical investigation

Listening to a story and subsequently having a conversation or dialogue with the patient in order to develop a sense of judgement and understanding is a necessary requirement of this approach to learning. Freire (1970) uses the term 'dialogue', which implies an exchange between two or more people. If dialogue is indispensable in the process of learning and this learning is best based in the real world, then who is better to provide the dialogue than the patients themselves? The patient sits firmly in the real world of practice or placement, while the teacher can be seen as removed from practice and as an instrument in the theory–practice gap (Freire 1970). Freire argues that this dialogue assists in the development of critical thinking, which is essential if the dialogue is to be meaningful and capable of transformation of, or changes to, practice.

The dialogue between patients and students in the classroom provides the students with a different form of knowing. In cancer education, for example, they may already know about the cell cycle and how chemotherapy works, but this only encompasses the facts about cancer and its development and treatment. It is the exchange of information with the patient, the dialogue, the questioning and inquiry by the students which helps them develop a deeper understanding of the patient's experience (Haigh and Hardy 2011; Job, Anstey, and Hopkinson 2016). The student is encouraged to critically reflect in order to understand the beliefs, attitudes and values the patient may have acquired through their experience of cancer, its treatments and services (Turnbull and Weeley 2013). They are also engaged in examining and challenging their own assumptions, attitudes, beliefs and values (Freire 1970). The duality of the process also facilitates the patient in gaining the same insight into the views, attitudes and values of the nurse; at its best, it is a reciprocal and mutually advantageous partnership (Job, Anstey, and Hopkinson 2016). Freire (1970) argues that this horizontal relationship fosters mutual trust as a logical consequence.

A great deal of attention has been paid to the process of learning and subsequent change (Dewey 1933; Fink 2003; Freire 1970; Rolfe 2013; Schön 1984). If it is desirable to facilitate understanding of the experience of the patient in order to more fully inform the practitioner about the holistic impact of health or illness, then the practitioner may develop a deeper empathetic understanding, which in turn helps to improve their practice and future communication with patients (Freire 1970; Rogers 1983).

Patient stories in healthcare education

Rolfe (2013) proposes that the lecture in healthcare education has become the teaching strategy of choice because it saves time and allows for larger cohorts of students. Rolfe also argues that a focus on passing assessments has become the aim of teaching, which has replaced learning in terms of importance (see also, Fink 2003). Freire (1970) earlier proposed that two distinct methods of teaching exist, which he names 'banking concept' (72) and 'problem posing' (79). In the former, the student is seen as a vessel for new information, facts and theory. The teacher is in an intellectually superior position and their job is to fill up the student with the required information. Freire proposes that the content of this one-way narration is often detached from reality and negates the need for reflective dialogue (Young and Paterson 2007). It is the banking concept approach to teaching that encourages the divorce between the reality of practice and theory. The gap widens because the banking concept of teaching assumes that the student is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; in this case, the student is a spectator rather than the investigator (Freire 1970).

A patient's story shared directly by the patient in the classroom enables a patient and student dialogue, which we argue sits firmly in the problem posing approach to education. The problem posing

approach to teaching enables all parties to ground themselves in the realities of the world, and this reflective and constructionist approach aids teacher and student in making knowledge discoveries which are relevant (Fink 2003; Freire 1970). This relevance arguably can act as a bridge between theory and practice and help all parties to challenge their assumptions, beliefs and attitudes (Freire 1970). Young and Paterson (2007) argue that this form of teaching is at the heart of a student-centred approach because it involves establishing relationships between the participants, the material and what the student already knows. Arguably this approach assists in the development of patient-centred practitioners (ibid). Fundamentally, this approach requires the student and patient to become co-investigators in the dialogue (Freire 1970). The patient and student conduct simultaneous reflections, which allow for deeper understanding of the implications of the problem and help to map out the holistic nature of any issue (ibid). In this way, they are jointly responsible for the process of learning and teaching within which they all grow. The problem posing approach to teaching enables all parties to ground themselves in the realities of the world, making knowledge discovery relevant in order to challenge the assumptions, beliefs and attitudes that impact on the emergence of self-awareness as opposed to the submersion of it (ibid).

Benner et al's (2009) multi-year comparative study conducted in the US recommended better integration of clinical and classroom teaching to foster student learning, in order to better prepare students for the challenges of professional practice. They argue that current practices in education are oversimplified and elementary, and therefore do not train the students for diverse clinical situations. Patient stories, through a reflective dialogue with students, are perhaps useful for bringing the messiness and complexity of practice into the academic environment. The reflective nature of patients' stories benefits emerging practitioners beyond the acquisition of better practical and professional knowledge. The skill of reflective learning equips students to become agents of change, which not only includes the clinical seminar but arguably extends into the political and public arena in the healthcare setting (ibid).

Knight, Buckingham, and Littleton (2013) argue that, in higher education, pedagogy should be in line with the epistemology of what is being taught. Healthcare education is about developing practitioners so that they can care for patients and service users. In this sense, patient stories are an excellent pedagogic tool, in accordance with Knight, Buckingham, and Littleton's (2013) theory, as they provide a method of learning about healthcare practice in the context of its application. As practice education shares the same purpose in healthcare education, it stands to reason that patient stories as a pedagogic tool work well alongside practice placement.

Patients in the healthcare system are abundantly available but a rather under-used resource for education purposes (Towle et al. 2016). Hence, more effort should be channelled into tapping into this resource and exploring how such patient and public involvement can fit within healthcare education.

Conclusion and further research recommendations

The aim of healthcare education is to educate professionals who are able to apply skills and knowledge learnt in the real world of practice. For that purpose, the incorporation of patients' stories and experience in the delivery of healthcare curricula is highly important.

Patients bring with them the reality of healthcare, from the perspective of care recipients, into the relative safety of the university environment. It triggers reflection and thus allows students to see the application of the theories taught and to gain new understanding of their own practice (Dewey 1933; Schön 1984). The inclusion of patients' stories in the classroom can assist students in the reflective dialogue that can support their education and assist in building a bridge between clinical practice and university-based education. The richness of patients' experiences can also help students develop the skills necessary to provide patient-centred care.

The dialogic exchange between students and patient offers a learning experience that is deeper and more dynamic than a typical lecture-based teaching method. It features the student as an investigator in their own learning and development as a professional rather than a spectator or a passive recipient of healthcare education (Freire 1970; Rolfe 2013). This approach engages the students in critical thinking

that is capable of leading to a positive change in the practice of the next generation of healthcare professionals (Freire 1970; Haigh and Hardy 2011).

The ability to think critically is essential in today's healthcare systems. Healthcare educators need to ensure that significant learning experiences are embedded in curricula, while maintaining and protecting a strong focus on person-centred care. Linking reflection and the patient story facilitates the creation of critically-thinking students, armed with the patient perspective – reflective practitioners with the tools and building blocks necessary for improved patient care.

Despite the benefits in healthcare education, patient involvement remains under-used (Towle et al. 2016). Therefore, this article calls for more research to be conducted into how to utilise patient involvement in addition to story-telling and how it can be embedded within healthcare curricula. While this article has offered a theoretical explanation of the importance of patients' stories to students, more research is required to understand the impact, potential benefits and harms revealing such stories might have for those patients involved.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Qualitative Research Symposium 2018

How Do We Belong? Researcher Positionality Within Qualitative Inquiry

Wednesday 31 January 2018, 08.00 – 16.30

The Chancellors' Building, University of Bath

Paper title: Theorising Dialogic Reflection: Being the Researcher and the Researched

Affiliated university or employer: Cardiff University, School of Healthcare Sciences

Contact information: Ken Wong, wongky2@cardiff.ac.uk

Symposium theme(s): Inquiring into Positionality or Engaging Positionality

Abstract:

This paper is a reflection on the methodological considerations that were integral to my PhD study on dialogic reflection, a process where students engage in reflective conversations with their peers about their experience. Fourteen post-graduate diploma occupational therapy students and I formed two action research groups for this Co-operative Inquiry. We concluded that dialogic reflection is an artistic method of enquiry about the world that embraces multiple perspectives and vulnerability.

This research had challenged me intensely in many ways, especially on my thoughts on the nature of enquiry and my position as a researcher and a participant in a Co-operative Inquiry. Co-operative Inquiry is based on epistemic participation, where researchers develop knowledge by getting involved as participants, and political participation, where participants are involved in the decision-making process of the research. The students who took part in my research were therefore considered my co-researchers.

Epistemic participation required me to acknowledge the fact that I had prior knowledge and preconceptions about the topic of this research. These initial ideas about the topic thus impacted the way I had approached the research. Epistemic participation was not easy as it is the antithesis to some writings about qualitative research where the researcher is expected to distance himself/herself from the researched. Furthermore, it encouraged me to reveal personal experiences to my participants which was at times rather uncomfortable.

Political participation was not straightforward either. Despite considering the students as my co-researchers, this research took on different meanings for us. At some points of the research, I found myself treating my co-researchers as participants instead. Nonetheless, I had included my co-researchers in the methodological considerations where feasible.

This paper challenges certain ideas about qualitative research and where the researcher belongs in the research process. It argues that the researcher is a knower as much of an enquirer, hence there is value in involving the researcher in the study as a participant. Conversely, the participant has a crucial role to play in developing a study about himself/herself. By reflecting on our understanding of the world, we can better understand our position as qualitative researchers.